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Twin Counties Competitive Assessment

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TWIN COUNTIES COMPETITIVENESS REPORT

Executive Summary

Using a conceptual model anchored in recent research on community competitiveness and information culled from a twenty year survey of several electronic databases, the Twin Counties Region's ability to compete in the new economy is evaluated by assessing the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in its existing stock of *polity, financial, physical, human, cultural, and social capital*.

The findings suggest strongly that, given its locational advantages and natural attributes as well local officials' deep commitment to regional collaboration, the Twin Counties Region has the opportunity to become a highly attractive place to live and do business. There are, however, major challenges which must be overcome if the region is to become highly competitive in the 21st century knowledge-based economy.

Leveraging an array of state and local financial incentives as well as investments in the region's education, training, and transportation infrastructure, local officials have experienced moderate success in recruiting new industry and retaining some of the long-standing major employers in the Twin Counties Region. But this conventional approach to economic development has done little to eliminate geographical disparities that exist between Edgecombe and Nash counties, racial disparities that exist between the region's whites and non-whites, and region-wide disparities in health and social-well being.

To address these issues and improve the attractiveness of the region as a place to live and do business, we offer the following six recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Develop strategies to rebrand the Twin Counties Region as a sustainable community.

Local officials must move beyond the conventional approach to economic development, which focuses largely on industrial recruitment, and embrace strategies that fall under the broader rubric of *sustainable community economic development*. Communities that embrace this broader approach take seriously not only the profit motive (i.e., recruiting companies that are capable of thriving and prospering locally) and environmental considerations (i.e., recruiting companies and supporting homegrown entrepreneurial ventures that create high tech and green jobs that do not adversely impact the natural environment), but also issues of social justice and

equity (i.e., striving to build individual and community assets especially for the region's most disenfranchised elements). Few communities do sustainable community economic development well. But, if the political will exists ample tools and resources are available to pursue community economic development through a triple bottom line sustainability lens.

Recommendation #2: Make talent recruitment a core element of the sustainable community economic development rebranding effort.

Augment efforts to recruit plants with strategies to recruit people who can help propel the region forward. Homegrown talent that moved away and have done well should be the initial targets of this people-based recruitment strategy. For those who have aging parents and grandparents in the region, now may be an opportune time to consider returning home given that they will likely have elder care responsibilities. Some "home place" migration as it is called is already taking place. As with industrial recruitment, local officials should devise incentive packages for home grown talent to return and use their creative talents and entrepreneurial acumen to develop viable businesses and sustainable jobs in the Twin Counties Region.

Recommendation #3: Re-engineer K-20 education so that the system better equips the current and future workforce with the skills they will need to thrive and prosper in the highly volatile global economy of the 21st century.

Workers, including those who have either experienced or are at substantial risks of economic dislocation, will have to demonstrate greater entrepreneurial acumen in responding to unanticipated economic crises and opportunities in the years ahead. K-20 education leaders in the Twin Counties Region must therefore develop an appreciation of and demonstrate a major commitment to "intellectual entrepreneurship" and develop strategies, initiatives, and multiple delivery channels to address the entrepreneurial education needs of the local population. Creating an entrepreneurial class and culture will reduce the region's reliance on industrial recruitment as the primary economic development and job creation strategy.

Recommendation # 4: Nurture and grow the local elder care economy.

As the Twin Counties Regions' population continues to age, a diverse array of age-appropriate products and services will be needed to serve the pre-boomers (born before 1945) and boomers (born between 1945 and 1964). Unlimited opportunities

exist for entrepreneurs who might be interested in figuring out how to design, build, and/or renovate commercial and residential properties as well as package and label goods and services that cater to the needs, cultural preferences, and consumer purchasing behaviors of the Twin Counties Region's "greying" population. Local official will have to create and/or recruit angel and venture capital networks whose investments can jumpstart, nurture, and grow commercially viable businesses in the elder care marketplace.

Recommendation #5: Reform the Electric Utility Rate Structure.

Electric utility costs in the Twin Counties Region, especially in the city of Rocky Mount, are too high and the policies and procedures undergirding electric utility rate setting are gravely in need of reform. Local officials must move quickly and aggressively to address this issue if the Twin Counties Region is going to successfully compete for business and talent in the years ahead. Failure to address this issue head on is a sure prescription for continued capital flight and loss of critical talent needed to propel the Twin Counties Region forward in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation #6: Leverage the power, influence, and global reach of the World Wide Web to promote the new Twin Counties Region's brand in the economic development marketplace.

An effective web-based marketing strategy will require all of the region's websites to be better coordinated and linked with timely, consistent, and up to date information. Government, business, city, tourist, and economic development organizations--all need to come together to create a unified vision of and marketing strategy for the Twin Counties Region that is consistent with the triple bottom line principles of sustainability.

Recommendation #7: Conduct region wide team building exercises with elected officials to begin to align platforms, processes, and people.

An "*esprit de corps*" has to be established among the diverse community stakeholders if the Twin Counties Region is to enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness as a place to live and do business. Only through effective team building can local officials begin to breakdown the historical barriers that have hindered the Twin Counties' effectiveness. The team building process is continuous as it can help to preserve individual and community interest, while also building interdependence for future

success. Despite the diverse geopolitical affiliations that exist within the region, the overarching goal has to be the better of the region—especially in the current era of economic and fiscal austerity.

Recommendation #8: Develop an all stakeholder-inclusive Twin Counties Region vision, mission, and set of core values.

Once effective teambuilding is achieved, comprehensive and cascading vision, mission, core values, and strategy development is necessary in order for the Twin Counties Region to execute recommendations one through six set forth above. Objectives, benchmarks, targets, and timelines are also required—all designed with interdependencies and the overarching goal(s) in mind.

Introduction, Research Design, and Study Purpose

Research indicates that communities that have proven to be attractive places to live and do business in the 21st century knowledge-based economy possess distinct characteristics. Highly attractive and competitive communities:

- Actively and aggressively, pursue strategic alliances with other communities, domestically and especially internationally, with an eye toward developing not only cultural ties but also profit-centered activities that generate revenue and create jobs for the local citizenry.
- Create a regulatory environment that promotes and supports the generation of new community wealth via civic entrepreneurial ventures and innovations that are designed specifically to sustain and enhance the health, viability, and vitality of the community.
- Recognize the need for, and are committed to continuous investment in, a world-class physical infrastructure that connects them to the regional, national, and international economy.
- Invest heavily in their educational system (K–12, community colleges, and four-year institutions) to ensure the availability of education and training programs for their citizens so that they can compete for new economy jobs, thereby enhancing the community's attractiveness to businesses.
- Instill in their citizens, especially their youth, the attitudes, values, and beliefs about education and work that are key to upward mobility in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.
- Strive to reduce, to the maximum extent possible, geographical, racial and/or ethnic, and class disparities by investing substantial resources in an array of community-building institutions (e.g., the YMCA, the YWCA, and the Boys and Girls Club) that seek to mend the social fabric and provide bridges to education and economic mainstream for their members, especially those who are socially and economically disadvantaged.

Under-girding these characteristics are six types of community capital assets —polity, physical, financial, human, cultural, and social — which interact, as

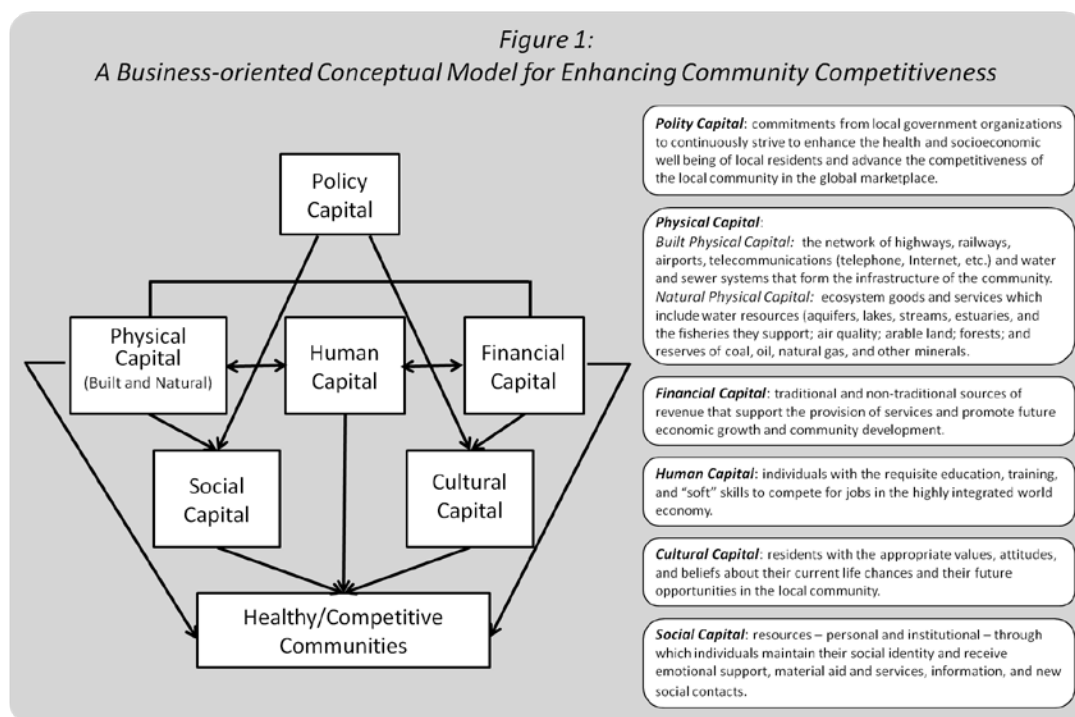
specified in Figure 1, to create a healthy, highly competitive community.¹ It is important to note that the absence of any one of these six types of capital can seriously limit the ability of a community to compete in the 21st century marketplace. But, as Figure 1 shows, it is the polity capital (i.e., the local government), which creates the conditions or climate enabling the other five types of capital to drive competitiveness. In highly competitive communities, government decision-making is agile and flexible, not static or bureaucratic. Assuming the business-equivalent role of managing partner, the local government is prepared — almost on an ad hoc basis — to foster or facilitate networks and linkages among key community stakeholders to build or develop the requisite physical, financial, human, cultural, and social capital to facilitate community economic health and competitiveness.²

¹ For a detailed discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of our model of community competitiveness, see James H. Johnson, Jr., 2002a, “Enhancing the Competitiveness of North Carolina Communities,” *Popular Government*, Winter, pp. 6-18; James H. Johnson, Jr., 2002b, U.S. Immigration Reform, Homeland Security, and Global Economic Competitiveness in the Aftermath of the September 11, 2001 Terrorist Attacks,” *North Carolina Journal of International Law and Commercial Regulation*, Vol. 27, pp. 419-464.

² To play this role effectively, the local government in a highly competitive community typically establishes a knowledge management system and data warehouse, which enables it to monitor trends and developments internal and external to the community in real time. For a detailed discussion of the importance of having such a system in place, see Don A. Holbrook, 1995, “Economic Development Facing up to the 21st Century,” IEDN’s Economic Development Intelligence Reports, available at http://iedn.come/information/intelligence/articles/edirfacing21st_cent10595.html, accessed March 28, 2003; and IEDN, 1996, “Site Selection Trends in the Electronic Era & Global Economy.” IEDN’s Economic Intelligence Reports, January, available at <http://iedn.com/infomration/intelligence/articles/janedire.html>, accessed March 27, 2003; IEDN, 2000, “Rural Economic Development Issues for the 21st Century,” IEDN’s Economic Development Reports, January, available at <http://www.iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/FEBEDIRE>, accessed March 28, 2003. Holbrook (1995) and IEDN (1996, 2000).

Depending on the nature of the issue, these networks may be industry- or sector-specific, ethnic-based, or regional in composition.³ In some instances, they may involve business leaders who are staunch competitors in the local marketplace. In highly competitive communities, leaders of competing businesses often work together to solve local problems because they recognize that their “coopetition” or “competitive collaboration” will ultimately benefit their respective companies.⁴ In other words, it is a form of enlightened self-interest.

Figure 1: A Business-oriented Conceptual Model for Enhancing Community Competitiveness



Sources: Compiled by authors based on Johnson (2002a).

³ Joel Kotkin, 1998. “Cities Need Leaders ... and Businessmen Are Indispensable,” *The American Enterprise*, September/October, Vol. 9, pp. 24–26+.

⁴ John K. Conlon, and Mellisa Givagnoli, 1998, *The Power of Two*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc.

In this report, we apply this model in our assessment of the current competitive position of The Twin Counties Region of eastern North Carolina, which is made up of two counties—Nash and Edgecombe--and 16 incorporated municipalities, including the city of Rocky Mount. In an effort to be both comprehensive and balanced in our assessment of the competitive landscape of the Twin Counties Region, we decided to undertake a community level SWOT analysis—a methodology most frequently used to evaluate the competitiveness of businesses but is increasingly used to assess the competitiveness of communities. Our goal is to identify the internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities and Threats) forces that shape and influence the Twin Counties Region’s attractiveness as a place to live and do business. As Table 1 shows, our analysis sought to answer specific questions about the region’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Table 1: Questions Posed in a Community-Level SWOT Analysis

Strengths
• What does the community do well?
• Does the community have a clear strategic vision?
• Does the community have an entrepreneurial orientation?
• Does the community culture produce a healthy environment in which to live and do business?
Weaknesses
• What could be improved in the community?
• What does the community do poorly?
• Is the community able to finance needed infrastructure?
• Does the community have poor debt or cash flow?
Opportunities
• What favorable circumstances is the community facing?
• What are the interesting trends?
• Is the community positioned to take on those trends?
• Is the community advanced in technology?
Threats
• What obstacles does the community face?
• What are the community's competitors doing?
• Are the demographic and economic conditions changing?
• Is technology threatening the community's competitiveness?
• What policies are state and federal lawmakers backing?
• Do the policies affect the community and, if so, how?

Source: Compiled by authors.

To answer these questions for the Twin Counties Region, we relied on a diverse set of qualitative and quantitative information. First, we engaged in the same type of community competitiveness intelligence gathering that a corporate relocation

consultant pursues to develop a short list of ideal sites for a client's business relocation or expansion.⁵ That is, we conducted an exhaustive search of publicly-available information using the electronic search engines and research indexes identified in Table 2.

Table 2: Gateways and Databases Used in the Research

GATEWAYS	DATABASES
AltaVista.com	All Business Websites
Google.com	General Search Engine
ABI Inform/ProQuest	Periodicals and Newspapers
ProQuest	All Articles
Lexis/Nexis	Academic Universe Statistical Universe Government Periodical Universe

Source: Compiled by authors.

We used the names of the two counties—Edgecombe and Nash—and the names of specific towns within the two counties (e.g., Rocky Mount, Nashville, Tarboro, and Princeville) as place identifiers and combined this information with an array of search terms culled from prior research on community competitiveness. The search, which included mainly newspaper and popular articles, technical reports, government documents, and statistical information, spanned a twenty-year period, 1990 to 2010.

⁵ IEDN, 1996, "Site Selection Trends in the Electronic Era & Global Economy," IEDN's Economic Development Intelligence Reports, January, available at <http://www.iedn.com/information/intelligence/articles/janedir.html>, accessed March 27, 2003.

The community-level SWOT results discussed below are based on our content analysis of these search results.

In addition to this exhaustive literature search, we also conducted telephone interviews and focus groups with key stakeholders in the nonprofit, for-profit, and local government sectors of the Twin Counties Region. We also analyzed the contents of the various websites maintained by two counties and incorporated municipalities that make up the region.

We used the conceptual schema depicted in Figure 1, which is designed to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in a community's endowment of capital assets, to guide our analyses and interpretation of the data from these multiple sources. Essentially, the goal was to fill the boxes in Table 3 with pertinent information for the Twin Counties region.

Table 3: Conceptual Schema for Analysis of the Twin Counties Region

	Polity Capital	Physical Capital	Financial Capital	Human Capital	Cultural Capital	Social Capital
Strengths	X	X	X	X	X	X
Weaknesses	X	X	X	X	X	X
Opportunities	X	X	X	X	X	X
Threats	X	X	X	X	X	X

To set the context for the SWOT analysis, we first provide a brief overview of the demographic and employment landscape of the Twin Counties Region. We also provide a snapshot of the current state of human development in the region.

Current Demographic & Economic Context

Over the past several decades, North Carolina has been one of the nation's most rapidly growing states. Between 1980 and 2009, for example, the state's population increased by nearly 60 percent while the nation's population grew by only 35%. And since 2000, North Carolina's population has grown almost twice as rapidly (16.1%) as the U.S. population (8%).

But throughout this period population growth within North Carolina's 100 counties was uneven. While many of the state's urban and amenity rich counties experienced rapid population growth, most of the eastern North Carolina counties and some of the western North Carolina counties experienced slow-growth, no-growth, and in some instances population decline. The Twin Counties Region falls into this latter category.

Between 2000 and 2009, as Table 4 reveals, the population of the Twin Counties Region increased by 3,551—an increase percentagewise (2.5%) which pales in comparison to the statewide population growth rate (16.1%). Moreover, this modest growth masks a substantial difference in the growth trajectories of the two counties—Edgecombe and Nash--that make up this region.

While Nash County's population increased by 8% or 7,036, Edgecombe County's population declined by -6.3% or -3,485. For the region as a whole, the population gain in Nash offset the population loss in Edgecombe, thus accounting for the region's modest population growth.

Table 4: Total Population Change for NC and Twin Counties Region, 200-2009

Area	2009 Population	Absolute Change 2000-2009	Percent Change 2000-2009
North Carolina	9,380,884	1,301,501	16.1%
Edgecombe County	51,853	-3,485	-6.3%
Nash County	94,743	7,036	8.0%
Twin Counties Region	146,596	3,551	2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

The differential growth experiences of Nash and Edgecombe counties are reflected in the population statistics for the incorporated places in the two counties (Table 5 & 6). Between 2000 and 2009, the city of Rocky Mount, which straddles both counties, experienced slow growth (1.3 % or 757). But every incorporated place in Edgecombe County, except Princeville, lost population between 2000 and 2009 (Table 5).⁶ And, by contrast, almost every incorporated place in Nash County, except

⁶ According to census statistics, Princeville experienced a 64% increase in its population during this period. This is probably an artificially inflated statistic due to the devastating effects of Hurricane Floyd-induced flooding, which destroyed the town and forced the population to evacuate, in September 1999. Many of the residents

Whitakers which also straddles the two counties, experienced growth—albeit modest—during this period (Table 6).

Table 5: Population Change for Incorporated Places in Edgecombe County, NC, 2000-2009

Incorporated Places	2009 Population	Absolute Change 2000-2009	Percent Change 2000-2009
Conetone	325	-38	-10.5
Legette	67	-9	-11.8
Macclesfield	400	-54	-11.9
Pinetops	1,242	-164	-11.7
Princeville	1,672	651	63.8
Rocky Mount	59,576	757	1.3
Sharpsburg	2,416	-7	-0.3
Speed	65	-8	-11.0
Tarboro	10,035	-1,188	-10.6
Whitakers	769	-29	-3.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

were not there when the 2000 census was taken but have since returned as the town has been rebuilt over the last decade.

Table 6: Population Change for Incorporated Places in Nash County, NC, 2000-2009

Incorporated Places	2009 Population	Absolute Change 2000-2009	Percent Change 2000-2009
Bailey	689	18	2.7
Battleboro	ND	ND	ND
Castalia	360	18	5.3
Dortches	882	72	8.8
Middlesex	868	28	3.3
Momeyer	308	16	5.5
Nashville	4,566	132	3.0
Red Oak	2,951	221	8.1
Rocky Mount	59,576	757	1.3
Spring Hope	1,306	34	2.7
Whitakers	769	-29	-3.6

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

Two demographic forces largely account for the Twin Counties Region's slow growth since 2000. The first is net in-migration and the second is the growth of the non-white population, especially Hispanics, which offset white population decline.

Between 2004 and 2008, the Twin Counties Region was a net migration magnet for movers from different states outside of NC (+1,000), especially states in the Northeast (+496), Midwest (+109), and the West (+27). The region also attracted a net flow of migrants from abroad (+21) during this period (Table 7).

Table 7: Net Migration, North Carolina and Twin Counties Region, 2004-2008

	North Carolina	Twin Counties	Edgecombe County	Nash County
Total		134	-519	653
Same State		-857	-723	-134
Different State		1000	214	786
Northeast		496	122	374
Midwest		109	-2	111
South		-6	17	-23
West		27	12	15
Abroad		21	-10	31

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Statistics of Income.

This net in-migration was almost offset by the net outmigration of Twin Counties Region residents who moved either to other places within North Carolina (-857) or to some other state in the South (-6). However, it should be noted that some of the newcomers between 2004 and 2008 added considerable value to the Twin Counties Region. For example, the per capita income of arriving migrants from the Northeast (\$18,463) was roughly \$2,000 higher than the per capita income of departing migrants for the Northeast (\$16,465) (Table 8).

Table 8: Difference in Per-Capital Income of Arriving and Departing Migrants, North Carolina and Twin Counties Region, 2004-2008*

	North Carolina	Twin Counties	Edgecombe County	Nash County
All		-\$169	-\$756	-\$68
Same State		-\$563	-\$1,322	-\$257
Different State		-\$74	\$1,500	-\$619
Northeast		\$1,998	\$4,148	\$543
Midwest		-\$1,136	-\$1,801	-\$1,317
South		-\$223	\$1,319	-\$591
West		-\$4,243	-\$1,741	-\$4,575
Abroad		-\$11,753	n/a	-\$11,753

Source: Internal Revenue Service, Statistics of Income.

*Positive values mean arriving migrants had higher per capita income than departing migrants. Negative values means departing migrants had higher per capita income than arriving migrants.

Within the Twin Counties Region, Edgecombe County appears to have reaped the greatest benefits from migration. Between 2004 and 2008, arriving migrants from a different state (\$14,230), the Northeast (\$14,900), and elsewhere in the South (\$13,919) had higher per capita incomes than departing migrants to a different state (\$12,730), the Northeast (\$10,752), and elsewhere in the South (\$12,600). With regard to movement between these three areas and Edgecombe County, arriving migrants' per capita incomes exceeded departing migrants' per capita incomes by \$1,500 (different state), \$4,148 (Northeast), and \$1,319 (South)(Table 8). Consumer spending and tax revenues generated by these more well off newcomers in all likelihood will enhance the community's economic vitality.

Partly as a function of this net in-migration, the Twin Counties Region's non-white and in particular Hispanic population increased sharply between 2000 and 2009. During this period, as Table 9 shows, there was a 56% increase (+2,528) in the region's Hispanic population. And since 2000, Hispanics have accounted for 72% of net population growth in the Twin Counties region. Among non-Hispanics, Blacks (+2,515), American Indians/Alaskan Natives (+96), Asians (+305), and people of two or more races (+348)--all experienced growth, but the gains among these demographic groups were largely offset by a decline in the region's White population (-3% or -2,241).

Paralleling the total population growth trend, race/ethnic population growth within the Twin Counties Region also was uneven between 2000 and 2009. Undergirding Edgecombe County's population decline were significant losses in both White (-1,877) and Black (-2,655) population. Nash County's growth was driven by gains in both Black (5,170) and Hispanic (1,694) populations. Not unlike Edgecombe County, Nash County's White population declined between 2000 and 2009 (Table 9).

Table 9: Absolute and Percent Population Change by Race and Hispanic Origin, North Carolina and Twin Counties Region, 2000-2009

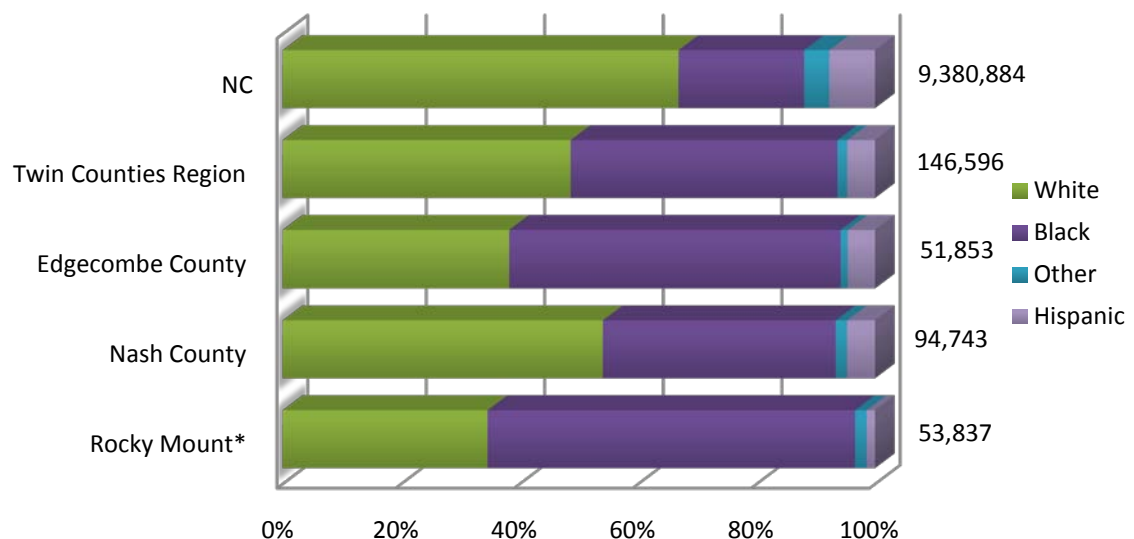
	North Carolina	Twin Counties	Edgecombe County	Nash County
Total	1,301,501 16.1%	3,551 2.5%	-3,485 -6.3%	7 8.0%
Non-Hispanic	967,429 12.6%	1,023 0.7%	4,319 -8.0%	5,342 6.3%
White	591,048 10.4%	-2,241 -3.0%	-1,877 -8.6%	-364 -0.7%
Black	253,493 14.6%	2,515 4.1%	-2,655 -8.4%	5,170 17.4%
AIAN	8,892 9.2%	96 21.6%	35 376.0%	61 17.4%
Asian	70,905 60.6%	305 54.6%	60 84.5%	245 50.2%
NHPI	1,766 53.3%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%
Two or More Races	41,325 63.0%	348 47.1%	118 57.3%	230 43.2%
Hispanic	334,072 87.1%	2,528 56.1%	834 53.6%	1,694 57.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

Partly as a consequence of the foregoing migration and uneven population growth trends, the Twin Counties Region was, at least in the aggregate, a racially/ethnically balanced community in 2009—roughly 50% White and 50% non-

White (Figure 2). But within the region, there were marked race/ethnic variations in the population distribution. More specifically, there was a high degree of residential segregation by race. While Nash County was predominantly White (56.4%), Edgecombe County and the city of Rocky were both majority Black (56.0% and 62.0%, respectively).

Figure 2: Race/Ethnic Composition of Population, North Carolina and Twin Counties Region, 2009



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, December 2009.

Between 2000 and 2009, much of the Twin Counties Region's population loss occurred among prime working age individuals who were between the ages of 25 and 44 (-14.9% or -7,920). The region experienced slow growth only because the losses in this cohort was offset by an sharp increase in the region's 45-64 year old boomer population (22.3% or 9,714) and 65+ year old senior population (18.6% or 4,571) as well as a more modest increase in the under 25 years of age population (1.6% or 924)

(Table 10). But, not unlike other demographic indicators, these aggregate statistics mask significant differences in the way in which age influenced population change within the two counties that make up the region. Edgecombe County loss population in every age cohort except the 45-64 boomer cohort and Nash County gained population in every cohort except the 25-44 year old prime working age cohort.

Table 10: Absolute and Percent Population Change by Age, North Carolina and Twin Counties Region, 2000-2009

Age	North Carolina	Twin Counties	Edgecombe County	Nash County
Total	1,301,501 16.1%	3,551 2.5%	-3,485 -6.3%	7,036 8.0%
< 25	438,535 15.8%	138 0.3%	-1,436 -7.3%	1,574 5.3%
25-44	52,312 2.1%	-7,025 -16.7%	-3,276 21.0%	-3,749 -14.2%
45-64	591,359 32.4%	7,945 23.6%	2,227 17.2%	5,718 27.6%
65+	219,295 22.5%	2,493 13.9%	-1,000 -14.4%	3,493 31.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, June 2010.

In part as a function of these shifts in the age composition of the Twin Counties Region and the two constituent counties, increased demands have been placed on the working age population (18-64) to generate the tax revenues to take care of those who are either too young (<18) or too old (65+) to work. Emblematic of this increased

pressure on the working age population, the total dependency ratio (non-working youth and seniors/18-64 population), the old age dependency ratio (65+ population/18-64 population), and ratio of seniors to children under 5—all increased between 2000 and 2009—far outpacing the increase in these indicators for the state as a whole (Table 11). Between 2000 and 2009, for example, the old age dependency ratio increased by 18%--from 22 to 26 seniors for every 100 working age individuals—compared to a 5.3 increase for the state—from from 19 to 20 seniors for every 100 working age individuals.

Table 11: Dependency Ratios, North Carolina and Twin Counties Region, 2009*

Indicator	North Carolina	Twin Counties	Edgecombe County	Nash County
Total Dependency Ratio	0.59 (3.5%)	0.64 (4.9%)	0.61 (-6.2%)	0.66 (8.2%)
Old Age Dependency Ratio	0.20 (5.3%)	0.26 (18.2%)	0.18 (-14.3%)	0.25 (25.0%)
Ratio of Seniors to Children < 5	1.8:1 (0.0%)	2.4:1 (9.1%)	1.6:1 (-15.8%)	2.2:1 (15.8%)

Source: Authors.

*Number in parentheses represents percent change in indicator between 2000 and 2009.

The Twin County Region's dependency ratios increased largely because the under 18 and over 65 populations—primarily non-income generating populations—increased more rapidly than the working age population. Between 2000 and 2009,

the working age population in the Twin Counties Region grew much slower (1.9%) than the statewide working age population (15%). Within the region, the working age population in Edgecombe County actually declined by (-3.5%). Thus, the region's working age population grew only because Nash County's 18-64 population increased by 4.5% between 2000 and 2009, which offset Edgecombe's population loss in this age cohort (Table 12).

Table 12: Percent Change in Population by Age, Twin Counties Region, 2000-2009

Age	North Carolina	Twin Counties Region	Edgecombe County	Nash County
Total	16.1	4.1	-6.3	8.0
< 5	23.0	5.1	1.6	11.8
<18	15.8	1.5	-8.8	4.9
18-64	15.0	1.9	-3.5	4.5
65+	22.5	18.6	-14.4	31.9
<18 & 65+	16.1	7.6	-10.6	13.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, June 2010.

The increasing demands imposed on the working age population by a growing dependent population are further exacerbated by the fact that, in contrast to the state, the Twin Counties Region has not been a major employment or job generator. As Table 13 shows, while the state created close to one million jobs between 1990 and 2007, the Twin Counties Region experienced net job loss (- 1,337) during this

period. Within the region, as Table 13 shows, Nash County generated more jobs than it lost, but Edgecombe County lost more jobs (-8,366) than were created in Nash County (+7,029), which accounts for the region's overall net job loss between 1990 and 2007.

Table 13: Employment Trends in North Carolina and the Twin Counties Region, 1990-2007

Area	Total Jobs Created	Total Jobs Lost	Net Employment Change
North Carolina	6,476,262	5,481,467	994,795
Twin Counties Region	87,180	88,517	-1,337
Edgecombe County	29,606	37,972	-8,366
Nash County	57,574	50,545	+7,029

Source: NETS.

There are three different ways jobs can be created and three different ways jobs can be lost. To illustrate the sources or components of employment change in North Carolina, the Twin Counties region, and Edgecombe and Nash counties between 1990 and 2007, we employ here a variation of a standard accounting model used in population demography. The model is as follows:

$$[\text{Firm Births} + \text{Firm Expansions} + \text{In-Migrating Firms}] - [\text{Firm Deaths} + \text{Firm Contractions} + \text{Out-migrating Firms}] = \text{Net Employment Change}$$

On the left side of this equation, jobs can be created by newly established firms (firm births), by the growth of existing firms (firm expansions), and by firms moving into an area (in-migrating firms). Jobs can be lost through firm closures (firm deaths), by firm layoffs (firm contractions), and by firms relocating outside an area (out-migrating firms). On the right side of the equation, our measure of net employment change is the difference between the activities that create jobs and those that destroy jobs.

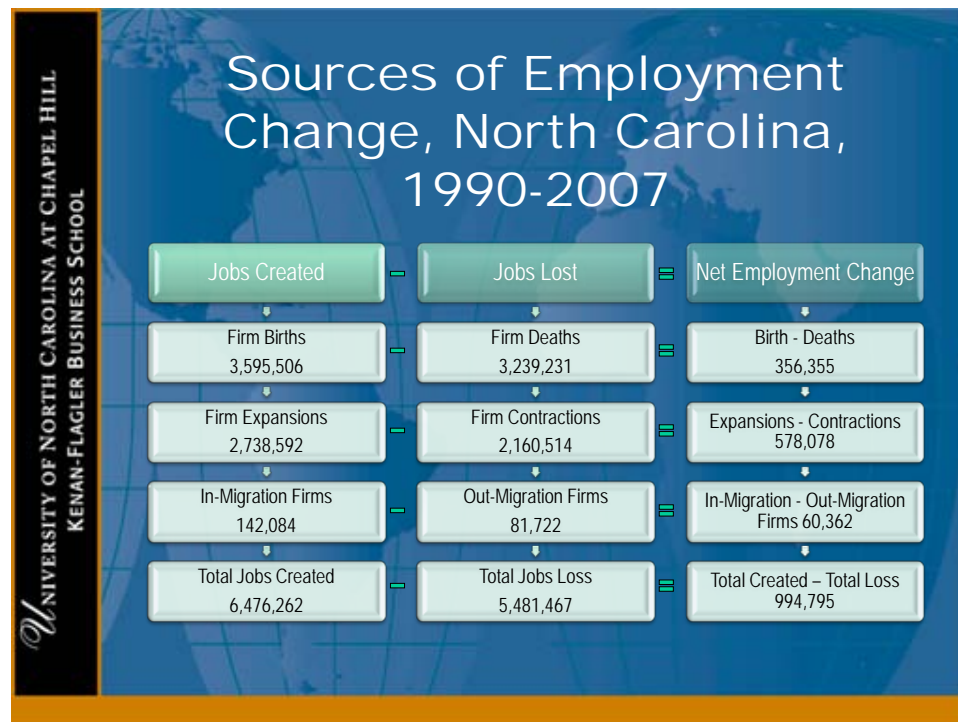
Figure 3 highlights the role these various forces played in employment change in North Carolina between 1990 and 2007. During this period, the North Carolina economy created 6.5 million jobs. Over half of these jobs (57 percent, or 3.6 million) were created by newly established firms and 41 percent were created by existing firms that added workers to their payrolls during this period. Firms relocating to North Carolina accounted for only 2 percent (142,000) of newly created jobs.

On the flip side, North Carolina lost 5.5 million jobs between 1990 and 2006. Nearly two-thirds of this job loss (61 percent or 3.4 million jobs) was due to firm deaths. Thirty eight percent of it occurred as a function of firm contractions (2.1 million jobs lost). Out-migrating firms accounted for about 2 percent (75,000) of total job loss during this period.

The difference between the number of jobs created (6.4 million) and the number lost (5.5 million) indicates that North Carolina experienced a net gain of approximately 995,000 jobs between 1990 and 2007. Much of this net job growth (61 percent) came about as a result of firm expansions which exceeded firm contractions by approximately 578,000 jobs. One third of it was due to firm births

which exceed firm deaths by 356,355 jobs. Accounting for 6 percent of net job growth between 1990 and 2007, the number of jobs created by in-migrating firms exceeded the number lost due to the out-migration of firms by 60,362.

Figure 3: Sources of Employment Change, North Carolina, 1990-2007

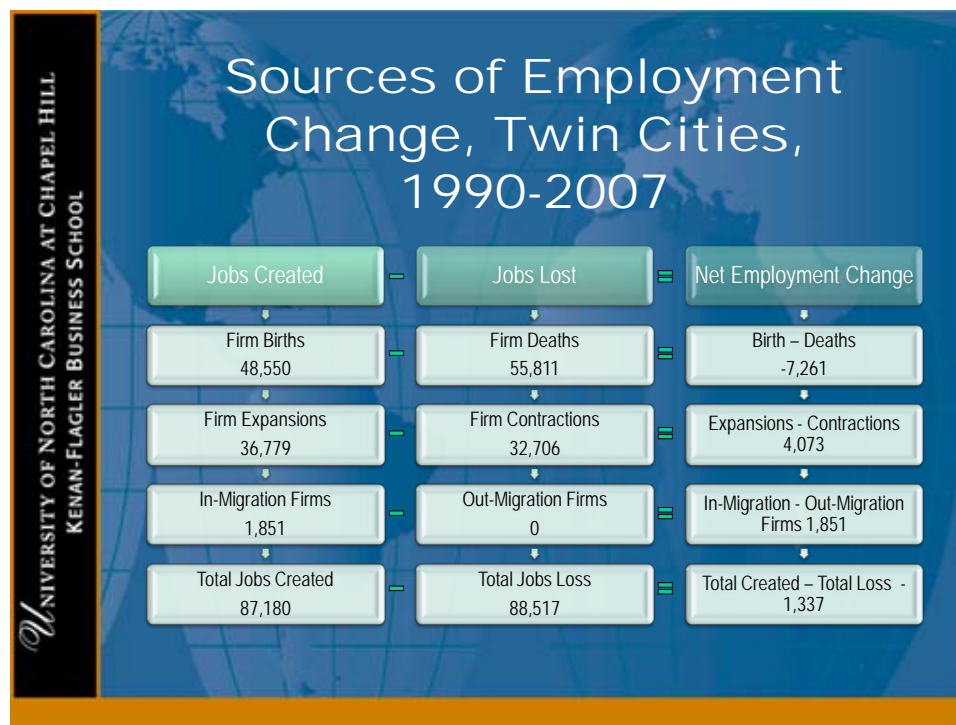


Source: NETS.

In the Twin Counties Region, as Figure 4 shows, the sources and direction of employment change were significantly different from the state's experience. The Twin Counties Region created 87,000 jobs between 1990 and 2007. Over half of these jobs (56%) were the result of employment generated by newly created firms (i.e., firm births) and most of the remaining jobs were created through existing firms expanding their workforces (43%).

Unfortunately, these newly created jobs were offset by job losses in the Twin Counties Region that totaled 88,517 during this period. A majority of this job loss (63%) was due to firm deaths, that is, firms going out of business. About one-third of the job losses were due to firm contractions, that is, firms reducing their workforces through layoffs. But the primary driver for the net job loss in the region was the fact that far more jobs were lost through firm deaths than were created through firm births. This suggests that the entrepreneurial culture is not as strong in the Twin Counties Region as it is statewide.

Figure 4: Sources of Employment Change, Twin Counties Region, 1990-2007



Source: NETS.

The State of Human Development in the Twin Counties Region

Against the backdrop of the foregoing demographic and employment trends, we now provide a snapshot of current life conditions and chances in the Twin Counties Region. Here we utilize a standard and widely used measure of the wellbeing called the Human Development Index (HDI).⁷

Three statistical indices—a health index, an education index, and a living standards index—are combined to create the HDI. The health index is based on life expectancy at birth in a state or county relative to high and low benchmarks. The Education Index incorporates measures of both school enrollment and educational attainment, again relative to high and low benchmarks.⁸ And the living standard index is measured using earnings relative to high and low benchmarks.

When these three indices are combined to create the HDI, the resulting values range between 0 and 10. An index of 10 signals the highest level of human development and an index of zero signals the lowest level of human development. Rather than having an intuitive meaning, the HDI for a particular area or group is interpreted relative to the corresponding value for other areas or groups.⁹

⁷ The Human Development Index has been applied domestically and in international contexts. The American version of HDI was developed by the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) using publically available data from the U.S. Census Bureau. SSRC calculated the HDI for the 50 states and for a range of racial and ethnic groups. See Sarah Burd-Sharps, Kirsten Lewis, and Eduardo Borges Martins, 2008, **The Measure of America: American Human Development Report: 2008-2009**, New York: Columbia University Press.

⁸ In calculating the Education Index, educational attainment is assigned twice the weight as enrollment.

⁹ At the country level, the HDI has been interpreted as the level of economic and social development with markers showing transitions, but this interpretation has not been developed for the American HDI.

For our purposes, we calculated the HDI for the state of North Carolina, for the Twin Counties Region, and for each of the two constituent counties--Edgecombe and Nash. We also calculated the HDI for the White population and the Black population in each of these geographical areas.¹⁰ Our findings are presented in Table 14.¹¹

The HDI for the total population of North Carolina (4.60) is below the HDI value for the United States (5.06), suggesting that the state lags the nation in terms of human development.¹² As Table 14 shows, the Twin Counties Region (3.93) lags the state (4.60) in terms of human development. The lag is due—at least in part—to the enormous disparities that exist in the human condition between the two counties that make up the Twin Counties Region. Nash County's HDI (4.53) approximates the statewide index (4.60). But Edgecombe County's HDI (3.07) is well below the state's HDI (4.60).

The scores on the indices that make up the HDI provide insights into the magnitude of the differences in the human condition across these two counties. Among North Carolina's 100 counties, Edgecombe has the lowest life expectancy at birth, which is clearly reflected in its Health Index value (2.67 versus 4.71 for the state). Edgecombe County also has significantly lower values on the Living

¹⁰ For the Twin Counties Region, the sizes of other population subgroups were too small to compute reliable HDIs.

¹¹ Data on earnings and education were taken from the pooled 2006-2008 American Community Survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Some of the education data were taken from Census 2000. All of the data can be found at www.census.gov. Data on life expectancy during 2006-2008 for the state, for the two counties, and for the white and African American populations were extracted from the North Carolina State Health Statistics (www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/lifexpectancy/). The specific variables and formulas for each component of the American Human Development Index can be found at www.measureofamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/measureofamerica_methodology.pdf

¹² See www.measureofamerica.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/05/measureofamerica_methodology.pdf

Standards Index (3.37 versus 5.03 for the state) and the Education Index (3.18 versus 4.05 for the state). As Table 14 shows, Nash County's Living Standards (5.47) and Education (4.08) indices have higher values than the corresponding indices for the state (5.03 and 4.05, respectively). Nash County's health index (4.04) is below the statewide health index (4.71), which accounts for the overall HDI (4.53) falling slightly below the state's HDI (4.60).

Undergirding these geographical disparities are stark racial disparities in the human condition (Table 14). For the state, the Twin Counties Region, and Nash and Edgecombe counties, the HDIs for African Americans (3.50, 2.81, 3.25, and 2.33, respectively) are substantially lower than the corresponding HDI values for Whites (5.18, 4.70, 5.23, and 3.96, respectively). And within the Twin Counties region, the racial disparity in the human condition is significantly greater in Nash County than in Edgecombe County. As Table 14 shows, differences in black-white living standards as measured by earnings largely account for the racially disparate outcomes in the human condition in the Twin Counties region.

The HDI values and the values of the components of the HDI highlight strengths and weaknesses in the human condition within the counties that comprise the Twin Counties Region. While the HDI does not capture all aspects of life and wellbeing, it is widely recognized as a highly reliable method for monitoring and assessing spatial and temporal changes in the human conditions in communities and among various demographic groups.

Table 14: Human Development Index for North Carolina and Twin Counties Region

	North Carolina	Edgecombe County	Nash County	Twin Counties
State Human Development Index	4.60	3.07	4.53	3.93
Health Index	4.71	2.67	4.04	3.75
Earnings Index	5.03	3.37	5.47	4.67
Education Index	4.05	3.18	4.08	3.38
White Human Development Index	5.18	3.96	5.23	4.70
Health Index	5.04	3.58	4.83	4.21
Earnings Index	5.93	4.99	6.41	5.74
Education Index	4.57	3.30	4.44	4.15
African American Human Development Index	3.50	2.33	3.25	2.81
Health Index	3.25	2.00	2.50	2.23
Earnings Index	3.57	2.46	4.37	3.48
Education Index	3.67	2.52	2.88	2.73
White-Black Differences in Human Development Index	1.60	1.98	1.89	1.89
Health Index	1.79	1.58	2.33	1.98

	North Carolina	Edgecombe County	Nash County	Twin Counties
Earnings Index	2.36	2.53	2.04	2.26
Education Index	0.90	0.78	1.56	1.42

Source: Compiled by authors.

SWOT Analysis

In order to overcome the geographical and racial disparities that exist in the human condition in the Twin Counties Region, local community stakeholders must understand and leverage the region's competitive advantages based on an analysis of relative strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Below the most significant findings of our SWOT analysis for the Twin Counties Region are presented. A summary of the SWOT findings are provided in Appendix A.

Strengths

The Twin Counties' endowment of built and natural physical capital assets constitutes one of the area's major strengths. The area is geographically situated half way between New York and Florida at the intersection of I-95 and I-64, one hour east of North Carolina's Research Triangle Park, and less than 50 miles from I-40, which links easily to I-85 and I-77. Given this strategic location, the Twin Counties Region is a major logistical hub in the U.S. economy.

Emblematic of its strategic importance to U.S. commerce, roughly 60% of the U.S. population is within an eight-hour trucking run of the Twin Counties region. Located 120 miles inland, the Twin Counties Region is also within reasonable

commuting distance of deep water ports in North Carolina (Morehead City and Wilmington) and Virginia (Norfolk and Hampton Roads) as well as strategic intermodal ports in Charlotte and Greensboro, North Carolina. As a consequence of these locational advantages, the Twin Counties Region is a strategic node in a distribution network for transporting containerized, bulk, or break-bulk cargo throughout the southeastern U.S. market. In particular, this network allows shippers to move container cargo between these intermodal ports and the deep water port in Wilmington at substantial savings.¹³

In addition to its strategic location in the U.S. interstate highway system and proximity to intermodal and deep water ports, there are two airports in the Twin Counties Region. The first and larger one is the Rocky Mount-Wilson Airport (RWI). It has a 7,000 foot lighted runway with an instrument landing system appropriate for corporate jet traffic. RWI also offers additional services, including aircraft maintenance, avionics services, charter, freight, flight instruction, aircraft sales and service.¹⁴ The second and smaller one is the Tarboro-Edgecombe Airport (ETC). This is a general aviation facility with a 4,000 foot paved and lighted runway that can easily handle small corporate aircraft.¹⁵

Commercial air passenger service is available within an hour's drive at the Raleigh-Durham International Airport (RDU), which offers daily flights to major U.S. and international destinations, and within a forty minute drive at the Pitt-Greenville

¹³ <http://www.econdev.org/>

¹⁴ <http://www.rwairport.org/Index.html>

¹⁵ <http://www.airnav.com/airport/KETC>

Regional Airport (PGV), which provides 11 daily commuter flights via USAir Express to Charlotte's Douglas International Airport (CLT).¹⁶ In addition, the area offers prompt access (80 min. drive) to an international air cargo gateway at Kinston Regional Jetport (ISO), which has the longest (11,500 feet) commercial runway in the state (and one of the longest on the Eastern Seaboard), and can accommodate the world's largest cargo jets.¹⁷

With regard to rail service, Rocky Mount—the Twin Counties' largest city--serves as a major terminal hub for CSX, serving all of eastern North Carolina. North Carolina is the center of CSX's 27,000-mile network which serves 23 states, the District of Columbia, and the Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec. Sites served by CSX provide direct rail links to North Carolina ports, the Great Lakes, and Gulf Coast areas. CSX's "Class 1" railroad has a network that runs throughout the area and is prepared to extend rail consistent with the client's demands. Daily switching, piggyback service, special cars, and customized port-related freight handling are available.

The Nash County Railroad, a locally owned and operated feeder line, connects with CSX in Rocky Mount, and runs 15 miles west to Nashville, NC.¹⁸ Amtrak, with a passenger station in Rocky Mount, provides the area with passenger rail service on the new Carolinian. This major north-south route includes service to Boston, New

¹⁶ <http://www.econdev.org/>

¹⁷ <http://www.ncgtp.com/jetkinston.html>

¹⁸ The Nash County Railroad has purchased land in Nashville that will allow it to expand its services to include trans-loading goods from truck to rail cars to be shipped around the country. This will provide area businesses with the opportunity to benefit from rail without being directly located on the railroad.

York, Baltimore, Washington, Charleston, Savannah, Orlando and Miami. East-west connections are through Raleigh and Charlotte.¹⁹

A number of U.S. (301, 264, and 258) and North Carolina (4, 33, 42, 43, 48, 58, 97, 111, 122, and 124) highways converge in the Twin Counties Region. As a consequence, approximately 98% of the area's population is within ten miles of a four-lane highway, which facilitates journey-to-work trips and other travel behavior. But, the Tar River Transit System encourages the use of public transportation to help preserve the environment.²⁰ It provides regular fixed-route bus service as an alternative method of transportation for the general public. Tar River Transit also provides complementary ADA paratransit service for individuals who have disabilities that prevent them from using the fixed-route service.

The Twin Counties Region also is endowed with valuable natural physical capital assets in the form parks and rivers, which not only enhance the quality of life in the area but also serve as major cultural attractions for tourist.

Battle Park, a natural 56.5-acre park on Tar River, contains Rocky Mount's first post office, theatre and the "rocky mounds" where Rocky Mount got its name. The park has a greenway, a boat landing, three picnic shelters, an overlook, playground equipment, two islands, and a gazebo.

Braswell Park is the city's oldest park, a two-acre park with a stream in the middle, azalea beds, playground, and a band stand.

¹⁹ <http://www.econdev.org/>

²⁰ <http://www.rockymountnc.gov/trt/>

City Lake Park is a 20-acre park that serves as the "mirror" of the City. Fishing and radio-controlled boats are permitted. Feeding the exotic water fowl is a popular activity. The park includes a ½-mile walkway, two fishing piers, an island with gazebo, and lighted fountain.

Historic Tree Park is a 7.4-acre park located on the Tar River. It features a walking trail that passes by a number of trees with historic interest.

Sunset Park, a 25-acre park beside the Tar River, is the city's main park. It features a mini train, merry-go-round, concession stands, two lighted basketball courts, a boat ramp, four picnic shelters (with numerous other picnic sites), a little league field, 11 lighted tennis courts, a sprayground and a tennis backboard.

The Tar River Paddle Trail is comprised of ten canoe and kayak access locations that connect over 20 miles of the Tar River and Stony Creek. The City of Rocky Mount operates boat ramps on the Tar River Reservoir at "Bend of the River" and Sapony Creek.

The Tar River Trail is a 3.9-mile walking/biking trail near the center of Rocky Mount. The trail follows the southern bank of the Tar River from City Lake on the west to Martin Luther King, Jr. Park on the east. In between, the trail passes through several city landmarks, including Sunset Park and Battle Park.

In addition to a rich endowment of built and natural physical capital assets, the Twin County Region's complex of polity capital, including local government entities, economic development organizations, and the local Chambers of Commerce constitute another major asset. Local officials' recognition of the need for and

concerted efforts to sustain the regional alliance of county and city governments, nonprofit organizations, and private industry in the Twin County Region's rebranding is itself a major strength. Commenting on the value of regional collaboration, Edgecombe County Board of County Commissioners Vice Chairman Charlie Harrell said, "uniting together is the first step to turning the economic corner. Job development is not one person or organization's responsibility. It is a whole community effort that requires very coordinated team work within the public and private sectors."

Although the region has experienced major job losses in the past two decades, The Twin Counties Region is anchored by a diverse set of major employers representing education (3,375 employees in 2009), food distribution (2,730), local government (2,245), health care services (2,050), pharmaceuticals (1,800), and distribution/logistics (1,425) industries.²¹ Banks, credit unions, and other financial institutions are prevalent in the region as well with RBC Centura as the area's fourth largest employer in 2009.²² A great deal of the region's success in attracting new businesses and helping existing local businesses grow is attributable, in large measure, to local leaders' dogged efforts to promote economic development and strengthen the area's human and social capital infrastructure. Paralleling statewide efforts, there is a clear commitment locally to attracting new industry to the area and helping businesses thrive.

²¹ <http://www.econdev.org/documents/MSAMajorEmployers.pdf>

²² <http://www.econdev.org/documents/MSAMajorEmployers.pdf>

Leading these efforts is arguably one of the region's greatest polity capital assets, the Carolina Gateway Partnership,²³ a public-private entity charged with fostering economic growth and development in the counties and municipalities that make up the Twin Counties area. The Carolinas Gateway Partnership is on the front line of recruiting new businesses to the area. Since it was created in 1997, CEO John Gessaman said the partnership has helped create more than 8,000 jobs and more than \$800 million in investment commitments.²⁴ Its objective is to promote economic development throughout the region in a manner which makes the overall welfare of the citizens of the region its highest priority. These efforts include attracting new business and industry to the area; working for the retention and growth of existing businesses; promoting business and industrial growth that will provide jobs for the local citizens; providing public/private leadership to coordinate and direct economic development; increasing awareness and knowledge of the region; and developing standby capabilities for unanticipated economic development opportunities.²⁵

The Carolina Gateway Partnership's web site is an effective economic development marketing tool, which showcases the Twin Counties Region as a unified whole, outlines the strengths of the entire area, and describes the benefits available to businesses interested in relocating there. It lists available sites and properties,

²³ <http://www.econdev.org/index.html>

²⁴ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/120676>

²⁵ <http://www.econdev.org/organization.html>

including certified industrial sites, other industrial sites, industrial buildings, commercial properties, and undeveloped land, and includes photos of each as well as a detailed description (acreage, location, topography, zoning, utilities, transportation, and price).²⁶

To maintain and enhance the attractiveness of the Twin Counties as a place to do business, three local Chambers of Commerce – The Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce,²⁷ The Tarboro-Edgecombe Chamber of Commerce,²⁸ and the Spring Hope Chamber of Commerce²⁹ – offer numerous activities and benefits for local businesses. Other organizations, described below, offer training, small business assistance, and job placement services for the area.

Numerous proactive business assistance programs afford the Twin Counties Region the opportunity to attract and retain businesses and, in fact, many business opportunities might not have been realized had financial assistance and business incentives not been available. The city of Rocky Mount's aggressive business incentives have helped make the area attractive to businesses looking to relocate there. Rocky Mount Councilman W.B. Bullock states, "When we offer cash incentives, we base them on job creation. Basically, we'll offer a company \$100,000 incentive to come here, but they've got to create X amount of jobs by a future date to

²⁶<http://www.econdev.org>

²⁷ <http://www.rockymountchamber.org/cwt/external/wcpages/index.aspx>

²⁸ <http://www.tarborochamber.com/>

²⁹ <http://www.springhopechamber.com/>

collect on that.”³⁰ Options for financial assistance are available through programs such as:

One North Carolina Fund - provides financial assistance, through local governments, to attract business projects that will stimulate economic activity and create new jobs in the state. Companies receive no money up front and must meet job creation and investment performance standards to qualify for grant funds. These grants also require and are contingent upon local matches.³¹

Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG) – performance-based grant. Grantees receive no up-front money and must meet agreed-on figures for job retention, job creation and average wages to receive grant funds.³²

Investment Tax Credit – qualifying companies that purchase machinery and equipment over a certain threshold receive a 7% tax credit.

Job Creation Tax Credit – companies receive a tax credit for each new job created, ranging from \$500 to \$12,500 per job created.

Worker Training Tax Credit – annual credit of \$500 to \$1,000 per employee trained.

³⁰ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/120676>

³¹ <http://www.nccommerce.com/en/BusinessServices/LocateYourBusiness/WhyNC/Incentives/OneNorthCarolinaFund/>

³²

<http://www.nccommerce.com/en/BusinessServices/LocateYourBusiness/WhyNC/Incentives/Job+Development+and+Investment+Grant>

Research and Development Tax Credit – credit equal to 5% of R&D expenditures in North Carolina.

Business Property Tax Credit – a 4.5% credit available for purchases of up to \$100,000 in business property per year.

In addition to the aforementioned programs, local financial incentives are also available. The Carolinas Gateway Partnership works closely with the local jurisdictions in the two-county region in developing financial packages for industries which are expanding or relocating to the area. The expanding or relocating industry must create a minimum of \$5 million in new private investment and 50 new jobs. Generally, the industry must meet the qualifications of the State's "Quality Jobs Act" to qualify for Partnership incentives. Local financial incentives include:

Land Availability – qualified industrial prospects may be eligible for area industrial park locations, where participation in land cost reduction is possible.

Training/Education – in addition to the State programs for worker training, supplemental funds are available for advanced programs for eligible professional and technical workers.

Worker Relocation – funds are available for relocation of professional and technical workers. Funds are very limited, and are provided based on the salary levels of relocating workers. Also, programs are available for "worker relocation briefings" at the site of choice of the industry. "Trailing spouse" programs are available as well.

Cash Grants for Equipment Redesign and Process Engineering – provided that the industry qualifies on the basis of capital investment and job creation, cash grants are available for design and purchase of new capital equipment.

Industrial Development Bond Financing – available through local governmental units.³³

Industrial and Business Parks have been developed in the Twin Counties Region, which leverage these financial incentives to attract and serve a wide array of businesses. Eleven properties in the area are certified by the N.C. Department of Commerce as “shovel-ready” for prospective industries, meaning they have undergone a prequalification process to address utilities, environmental concerns, and access issues. “There are no other two-county areas with as many certified sites,” said John Gessaman, President and CEO of the Carolinas Gateway Partnership.³⁴ The area currently offers the following Industrial and Business parks for businesses interested in relocating to the region:

Bourne-Long Site is located between Rocky Mount and Tarboro at the US-64 and Kingsboro Road interchange. A portion of the acreage is zoned AR-30, and is in the TCO (Transportation Corridor Overlay). Other areas are zoned

³³ <http://www.econdev.org/incentives.html>

³⁴ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56341>

commercial, industrial and agricultural. The potential for rezoning is very favorable.³⁵

Fountain Industrial Park in Rocky Mount is an 80-acre site located just off US 301 by-pass, adjacent to Rocky Mount's newest industrial corridor, and near North Carolina Wesleyan College. It is zoned I-2 for light to heavy industrial and related facilities.³⁶

Kingsboro Industrial Park is located between Rocky Mount and Tarboro at the US-64 and Kingsboro Road interchange. It is zoned M-2 (Heavy Industrial); surrounding areas are zoned commercial, agricultural, and within TCO (Transportation Corridor Overlay).³⁷

Kingsboro-Long Site is located between Rocky Mount and Tarboro at the US-64 and Kingsboro Road interchange with CSX Rail along the southern property boundary. The site is zoned M-2 (Heavy Industrial). Surrounding areas are zoned commercial, agricultural, and within TCO (Transportation Corridor Overlay).³⁸

³⁵ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/bourne.html>

³⁶ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/fountain.html>

³⁷ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/kingsboro.html>

³⁸ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/kinglong.html>

Kingsboro-Rose Mega Site is located 5 miles east of Rocky Mount, 6 miles west of Tarboro, and is zoned AR-30 (Agricultural/Residential).³⁹

Long Site is located between Rocky Mount and Tarboro at the US 64 and Kingsboro Road interchange. A portion is zoned B-2 (Gen. Business); another portion is zoned AR-30. The potential for rezoning is very favorable. The surrounding area, zoned M-2 (Heavy Industrial), is within the Transportation Corridor Overlay (TCO).⁴⁰

Long Site #2 is located five miles east of Rocky Mount and six miles west of Tarboro. A portion of the acreage is zoned AR-30, and is in the TCO. Other areas are zoned commercial, industrial and agricultural. The potential for rezoning is very favorable.⁴¹

Mid-Atlantic Industrial Center is almost 1700 acres located on NC-33 at I-95 near Whitakers and is zoned A-1, GC (General Commercial).⁴²

Middlesex Corporate Center located along US 264 near Middlesex consists of 322 available acres currently zoned A-1 with rezoning favorable.⁴³

³⁹ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/kingsboro-rose.html>

⁴⁰ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/long.html>

⁴¹ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/long2.html>

⁴² <http://www.econdev.org/properties/midatlantic.html>

⁴³ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/westnash.html>

Nashville Business Center is at the intersection of US-64 Alternate and US-64 Bypass at the western edge of Nashville and is zoned I-1 - manufacturing and distribution.⁴⁴

Nashville Technology Park is located at the intersection of US-64 Business and US-64 Bypass inside the town of Nashville's Extra-Territorial Jurisdiction (ETJ) and is zoned industrial.⁴⁵

Northside Business Park is a mixed-use development (not certified) zoned for commercial and light industrial users. It is located at US-301 in Rocky Mount.⁴⁶

Pleasant Grove Industrial Park is a manufacturing/distribution development (not certified) located 1.5 miles from US-64 inside the town of Nashville's ETJ.⁴⁷

Tarboro Commerce Center is a new industrial center zoned I-2 industrial, located in Tarboro at the US-64 and McNair Road interchange.⁴⁸

Whitaker Business and Industry Center in Gold Rock is located on I-95 in Nash County. The Center is made up of over 300 acres of prime interstate highway property zoned M-1 manufacturing and distribution/warehouse. Individual

⁴⁴ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/nashvbus.html>

⁴⁵ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/nashtech.html>

⁴⁶ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/northside.html>

⁴⁷ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/pleasantgrove.html>

⁴⁸ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/taredge.html>

sites may be configured in sizes ranging from five to 100 acres. Protective covenants ensure appropriate coverage ratios, building materials, landscaping and signage.⁴⁹

While the Carolina Gateways Partnership focuses on bringing in business and industry for the Twin Counties region, the Nash County Visitors Bureau, mainly through its Rocky Mount Travel and Tourism web site, focuses on attracting visitors and potential residents to the area.⁵⁰ Showcasing “Remarkable Rocky Mount,” the web site targets not only visitors and potential residents but also meeting and event planners, steering each audience toward relevant information about the area.

The Nash County government web site⁵¹ has a polished, professional look, with user-friendly links to information, which is organized and categorized in a way that makes it easy to find pertinent information. County Commissioners’ meeting agendas and minutes are available on the web site going back over ten years. News of interest regarding government programs and activities are on display on the home page. Business permits and fee schedules are listed and available for download. Contact information is available for the county manager, commissioners, and members of boards and committees. Property to be sold by the county is listed on the web site. Overall, the Nash County web site presents a professional, business-friendly, transparent view of the county government.

⁴⁹ <http://www.econdev.org/properties/whitaker.html>

⁵⁰ <http://www.rockymounttravel.com/index.html>

⁵¹ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us/>

The Edgecombe County web site also has important information available electronically. GIS maps, a web mapping application, and property tax information are available online. Properties for sale by the county are listed on the web site. Edgecombe County activities and program information is listed on the home page. Contact information is available for the county manager and commissioners. Taxes and utilities can be paid online.

The City of Rocky Mount web site has a very professional appearance and layout, and information is available and easy to locate. Agendas are available for some board and commissioners' meetings. Business permit applications and fee schedules are available. Links are available to the Carolinas Gateway Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce, economic development information, statistics, and news of interest. Contact information is available for city employees. However, there is no information or link to a specific tourism web site. Overall, however, the city of Rocky Mount offers a transparent, professional, and easy to use web site.

That local officials recognize the value-add of investments in the physical capital infrastructure of the Twin Counties Region is another major strength. Commenting on the importance of these transportation infrastructure projects, Rocky Mount Mayor David Combs said, "I think any time you have a new road being built, you will have businesses that are going to be interested in locating along the road or

at the major intersections,” [that’s the case] almost with any road, particularly in a commercial area like [U.S.] 301.”⁵²

Elaborating on the value add of physical infrastructure projects, Alan Matthews, director of business recruitment for the Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce, said a new Sheetz convenience store, which is under construction on the east side of U.S. 301 about eight blocks from a \$31.9 million Northern connector tie-in to U.S. 301 near Fenner Road, was lured to the site by this infrastructure improvement project. “[The connector] was the emphasis for them choosing to locate at the site,” Matthews said. He goes on to note that the connector can only make the commercial properties in the area along U.S. 301 near Fenner Road more appealing. “Good roads are important to economic development, not only for industrial, but retail and service industries,” Mathews said. “Whenever a city can increase its accessibility and lessen a drive [to an area],” he added, “it’s attractive to retailers.”⁵³

Local officials have leveraged their infrastructure investments to position the Twin Counties Region as a global logistics and distribution hub. Several companies have already been recruited to the area for distribution facilities, such as QVC home shopping network, which celebrated its tenth anniversary by opening a distribution center in Rocky Mount. Rocky Mount has also attracted several grocery distribution companies. For example, Meadow Brook Meat (also known as MBM Corp.), one of the largest food distribution companies in the country, is headquartered in Rocky Mount.

⁵² <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/62292>

⁵³ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/62292>

Employing hundreds of local employees, the restaurant distributor delivers food to companies like Burger King, Red Lobster and Olive Garden.⁵⁴ McLane Rocky Mount operates a grocery distribution center in Battleboro.⁵⁵

As the home-base of seven food processing and distribution companies with a total of 2,730 local employees, some local officials assert that these recruitment efforts have created a food processing cluster in the Twin Counties Region. John Gessaman, the CEO and President of Carolinas Gateway Partnership, said “From 2000 until the current time, this [food processing cluster] has been probably the fastest-growing segment.”

Efforts by local officials to think strategically about the potential of creating new business clusters must be viewed as an additional strength of the Twin Counties Region. For example, the Carolinas Gateway Partnership proposes to create a “Technology Corridor” which will stretch from the Raleigh-Durham area through Greenville and include the counties Durham, Wake, Wilson, Nash, Edgecombe and Pitt. As currently envisioned, the proposed Technology Corridor will leverage the presence of high tech industries that already operate in the Twin Counties Region. For example, Hospira, an International Pharmaceutical company, and Honeywell Aerospace have been operating in Rocky Mount for decades. And Cummins Rocky Mount Engine Plant, which recently produced its 3 millionth engine, has been

⁵⁴ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/124669>

⁵⁵ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/124669>

building engines and generators in the area for a diverse set of industries, including agriculture, construction, automotive, marine, since 1983.

To develop the proposed Technology Corridor, the Carolinas Gateway Partnership plans to create a marketing campaign to attract new advanced manufacturing industries to the area.⁵⁶ In addition to the area's existing high tech industries, the campaign would leverage the reputation and resources of the Research Triangle Park and the various universities and research institutions in the region. Elaborating on this proposal, Frank Harrison, chairman of the Carolinas Gateway Partnership, said,

We would create a corridor that would be advanced manufacturing technology that all of us already have, but brand it. That way, you get national recognition, a state recognition, having the commerce department and the governor's office thinking conceptually. We have to basically work on our present strengths. We are very strong in distribution and food processing, We are very strong in advanced manufacturing, and advanced manufacturing is tech.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56978>

⁵⁷ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56978>

In addition to the Technology Corridor proposal, both Edgecombe and Nash are also included in the Bioeast Alliance,⁵⁸ a Nash, Edgecombe, Wilson, Pitt, and Wayne counties' collaboration that showcases the area as a major life-sciences region.

Local leaders' efforts to pursue green, adaptive re-use, and Brownfield redevelopment strategies to make the Twin Counties Region a more attractive place to live and do business constitute additional strengths. Sustainability or "go green" efforts are being pursued in both public and private sectors in the Twin Counties area. Examples of these types of efforts include:

Keep America Beautiful (KAB) of Edgecombe and Nash counties – this is a joint venture of government and the private sector. Edgecombe and Nash Counties and the City of Rocky Mount provide the basic operating budget, and KAB works through its volunteers, businesses, and interested civic and governmental groups to identify, develop and coordinate programs to accomplish a sustained and substantial reduction in litter and awareness of other environmental issues. KAB also runs the Adopt a Spot program, installing signs to recognize groups that adopt and commit to clean a street, stream, or spot.⁵⁹

Clean Fuel Advanced Technology Vehicles - The Nash County government has added 'green' vehicles to the Department of Social Services and the Tax

⁵⁸ www.nceast.org

⁵⁹ <http://www.rockymountnc.gov/kab/>

Department.⁶⁰ Edgecombe County purchased five dedicated natural gas vehicles and six refueling panels for use by Social Service employees, the Sheriff's Department, and the Health Department.⁶¹ It has also begun using biodiesel in some of its school buses. Rachel Burton of Piedmont Fuels states that "The biodiesel creation process produces a decrease in carcinogens of particulate matter, burnt hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide, which is good for the environment and has a positive impact on public health."⁶²

Piedmont Natural Gas – The company has opened an operations center in Tarboro in a new building that is one of only 25 in North Carolina to achieve Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. The facility features low-emitting carpets, sealant, paint and other materials that allow for optimized indoor air quality; natural light throughout the facility to reduce electricity consumption; multiple thermostat zones for greater control and increased efficiency, and water-efficient fixtures and landscaping. Also, regional and recycled building materials were used throughout the construction process to decrease pollution from long-distance transport. "We

⁶⁰ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us/GOVERNMENT/AirQualityEnergyandTransportationGrant.aspx>

⁶¹ http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/client_resources/econdev/2008_11-25_edgecombe_success.pdf

⁶² <http://www.wral.com/news/local/blogpost/7666701/>

designed this facility with sustainability in mind,” said Project Architect Gary Beal, AIA.⁶³

Additional efforts to ‘go green’ in the region include the following:

- Nash County is utilizing a \$40,000 grant to demolish and remove abandoned manufactured homes from rural areas, helping to improve public safety, protect property values, and eliminate slum and blighted conditions.⁶⁴
- Edgecombe County has been working with Appalachian State University to find uses for landfill gas through the Community T.I.E.S program. They are currently in talks with a private company to sell their carbon credits as well as to find innovative ways to use the gas produced at the landfill.⁶⁵
- Edgecombe Community College has installed a wind turbine on its campus to harness the energy generated from wind power.⁶⁶

With regard to adaptive re-use and Brownfield redevelopment, the Rocky Mount Historic Mill Village, a product of the late 19th and early 20th centuries which was forced to close as a function industrial restructuring, is being redeveloped into a mixed-use project by Capitol Broadcasting Co., the parent company of WRAL-TV and

⁶³ <http://dailysoutherner.com/business/x1210035454/PIEDMONT-NATURAL-GAS>

⁶⁴ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us>

⁶⁵ http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/client_resources/econdev/2008_11-25_edgecombe_success.pdf

⁶⁶ http://www.edgecombe.edu/news/April_27_10_Windspire_install.htm

successful developer of the American Tobacco Campus in Durham. “I think it will be a combination of office and residential and some retail (shops), but not mainline retail, maybe some restaurants,” said Jim Goodman, CEO of Capital Broadcasting.⁶⁷ Plans call for a walkway connecting the mill across the river over to Battle Park.

The Douglas Block project in the city of Rocky Mount is another example of such efforts in the Twin Counties region. This is a public-private redevelopment project that will hopefully result in a thriving downtown commercial center. Phase One calls for the renovation of six historically significant buildings, all of which comprised the African American business district in the early to mid-1900’s. The \$8 million effort to redevelop this site has been financed by a combination of historic tax credits, new market tax credits, a Section 108 HUD Loan, and public investment.⁶⁸

To the same end, Edgecombe County is moving forward with an \$8 million plan to renovate the County Administration Building, the Edgecombe County Courthouse, and the Embarq building (to house the health department) in downtown Tarboro.⁶⁹ In addition, the town of Nashville has embarked upon a \$1.22 million “streetscape” downtown renovation project.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/135935>

⁶⁸ <http://www.douglasblock.org/>

⁶⁹ <http://dailysoutherner.com/local/x603542828/County-moves-forward-on-renovations>

⁷⁰ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/news/nashville-moves-forward-downtown-project-142399>

The Twin Counties dedicated pool of mainly semi-skilled labor is a major human capital asset. Jonathon Waldron, vice president of Hospira's Rocky Mount operations, states that "we have employees that are truly exceptional. We have had a great experience here. The fact we have been here for 40 years should be significant." He said the company can find qualified employees within a 60-mile radius. "With the types of high-technology products we make, we are looking for specific skill sets," he said. "When we can, we hire from the Rocky Mount area. When we can't, we go outside. We have a dedicated and well-trained work force which is essential for the type of highly regulated business that we are in. It's also a work force of high integrity with an excellent work ethic."⁷¹

Ken Anderson, plant manager of Cummins Rocky Mount Engine Plant, echoes the sentiment. "Some of the factors that have helped sustain our investment in the Rocky Mount area include a flexible and capable work force," he said. "Being able to work in a flexible environment that allows us to meet the needs of our customers is critical for a company like ours."⁷²

Several institutes of higher learning in the Twin Counties Region offer an array of degree granting, continuing education, and custom training programs to ensure the availability of a well-trained workforce. Collectively, these institutions and

⁷¹ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/124669>

⁷² <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/124669>

programs represent yet another strength or asset. Moreover, there are twelve colleges and universities located within an hour's drive of the Twin Counties Region.⁷³

Rocky-based North Carolina Wesleyan College is a four-year coeducational, liberal arts college, with a number of pre-professional programs, awarding Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees. The college conducts cutting-edge research in biotechnology and molecular biology. The ADVANTAGE program provides an accelerated business administration degree. About 800 students are enrolled in the traditional Rocky Mount program. Another 900 students are enrolled in evening college programs at sites in Rocky Mount, the Triangle, and Goldsboro. The 200-acre campus contains six residence halls, nine academic and main buildings, a Performing Arts Center and outdoor athletic facilities, including soccer field, baseball field, tennis courts, intramural fields, and softball field.⁷⁴

Shaw University offers a new design for teaching and learning through a Center for Alternative Programs for Education (CAPE), which is housed on its Rocky Mount satellite campus. This program targets those unable to attend traditional institutions of higher education and those who desire an education while continuing to work. Students are afforded an opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills through undergraduate, graduate and continuing education course work. Students are able to earn as they learn through such instructional modes as independent study,

⁷³ <http://www.econdev.org/training.html>

⁷⁴ <http://www.ncwc.edu/about/key-facts>

internships, seminars, life experiences and regular classes offered during the day, evenings, and on weekends.⁷⁵

Representing yet another strength, Edgecombe Community College (ECC) and Nash Community College (NCC) have developed strong relationships with area businesses and formed a variety of partnerships with the area's public schools. The Tech Prep Program was developed to guide students into course ranging from high school preparation to Associate in Applied Science Degrees. Cooperative programs are also in place in public schools through the community colleges. Both community colleges also offer customized programs and training services for job growth, productivity enhancement, and technology investment for new and existing business and industry.⁷⁶ They also offer programs leading to the North Carolina's Career Readiness Certificate (CRC), which is designed to meet the needs of both employers and job seekers in this transitioning economy. For employers, the CRC offers a reliable means of determining whether a potential employee has the necessary literacy, numeracy and problem solving skills to be "job ready." For job seekers, the CRC serves as a portable credential that can be more meaningful to employers than a high school degree or a resume citing experience in a different job setting.⁷⁷

ECC's main campus is located on 120 acres 2.5 miles south of Tarboro and comprises nine buildings. ECC also operates a campus in the Edgecombe County

⁷⁵ http://www.shawuniversity.edu/a_admission_cape.htm

⁷⁶ http://www.nccommunitycolleges.edu/Business_and_Industry/CustomizedTrainingIntegratedPrograms.htm

⁷⁷ <http://www.edgecombe.edu/crc/>

portion of Rocky Mount. ECC offers two-year programs leading to Associate in Applied Science degrees; technical, vocational or college transfer programs; a Networking Technology Program for Certified Network Engineers; and tele-courses offered through a North Carolina Information Highway grant. Classes for traditional and non-traditional students are available during the day, evening, and online.⁷⁸

NCC offers over 80 academic programs, many of which lead to a degree, diploma or certificate. Included are two-year technical programs leading to Associate in Applied Science degrees and college transfer programs, which give students the knowledge and expertise required for challenging careers or successful transfer to four-year colleges or universities. Vocational, occupational, business, and industry-related programs are offered, including certification and pre-licensing programs. NCC also offers professional development training for truck driving, vehicle escorts, teacher education, and computer training.⁷⁹

The Gateway Technology Center is an innovative new concept designed to make it easier for adults in the Rocky Mount area to take college courses or earn a degree via distance education. Students utilizing this program apply directly to degree programs at NC State University or East Carolina University and earn the same

⁷⁸ http://www.edgecombe.edu/about_ecc/gen_info.htm

⁷⁹ http://www.nashcc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=333&Itemid=497

certificate or degree that they would earn on-site at the main campus. The on-line courses are taught by the same faculty that teaches the on-campus courses.⁸⁰

The Gateway Center is a 16,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility located on the campus of NC Wesleyan College, with modern classroom space, high-speed Internet access, distance learning facilities and public computing access. It is operated by the Gateway Technology Center, Inc., a nonprofit corporation comprised of representatives from the City of Rocky Mount, Nash County, NC Wesleyan College and the Carolinas Gateway Partnership. It is funded by a variety of both public and private organizations and receives educational programming from North Carolina State University and East Carolina University.⁸¹ The Gateway Technology Center has classrooms, an industrial lab, a distance learning lab, and conference rooms that can be rented for instructional and research purposes.⁸²

The Turning Point Workforce Development Board is non-profit organization which is responsible for developing policy and overseeing local workforce development initiatives in partnership with local elected officials. Serving Edgecombe, Halifax, Nash, Northampton and Wilson counties,⁸³ Turning Point provides services to area businesses in order to enhance their workforce, while providing incentives to increase production and profitability. Services include on-the-job training and North

⁸⁰ <http://www.gatewaytechnologycenter.org/faqs.htm>

⁸¹ <http://www.gatewaytechnologycenter.org/about.us.htm>

⁸² <http://www.econdev.org/gtc.html>

⁸³ <http://www.turningpointwdb.org/>

Carolina's Incumbent Workforce Development Training Program (IWDP), which is funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and designed to help established North Carolina businesses improve employee productivity, reduce employee turnover, and increase business competitiveness. The specific objectives of IWDP include upgrading employee skills, increasing employee wages, providing training in portable (i.e., transferable) skills, and promoting business retention and competitiveness.⁸⁴ The organization also runs a JobLink Career center in Rocky Mount, providing career and labor market counseling for job seekers to assist with career choices and job placement.⁸⁵ They also offer training services and supportive services such as transportation and child care.

Nash-Edgcombe Economic Development, Inc (NEED), a non-profit private corporation, operates a variety of federal, state and locally funded programs, which are designed to advance the general welfare, promote self-sufficiency, increase self-worth, and protect and enhance individual dignity of low income people.⁸⁶

Several institutions exist in the Twin Counties to foster and facilitate entrepreneurship and small business development. Two are highlighted here.

The Nash Community College Small Business Center (SBC) provides free, confidential counseling services for new and existing businesses. The SBC also offers

⁸⁴ http://www.turningpointwdb.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=76

⁸⁵ http://www.turningpointwdb.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=67

⁸⁶ <http://www.needcaa.com/>

a variety of workshops and courses to help small businesses be successful. The SBC co-sponsors programs with the Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce such as Lunch 'N Learn seminars and more in-depth seminars on topics of interest to area businesses and their employees.⁸⁷

Similarly, the Rocky Mount/Edgecombe Community Development Corporation (RMECDC) has a business development and resource center that provides counseling and technical assistance to small and minority business entrepreneurs. Its goals are to promote economic advancement and independence of the residents in the target areas of Rocky Mount, Nash and Edgecombe counties; increase growth of minority and small business development; increase entrepreneurship in order to produce convenient goods and services for underdeveloped communities; develop access to capital; focus in the area of skills training, marketing, finance, accounting, construction assistance and general management.⁸⁸

RMECDC also houses the Edgecombe County Business/Industrial Incubator (ECBII). ECBII goals are to foster the development and growth of technology focused small businesses within the region; to provide employment opportunities; and to foster the development and growth of Edgecombe County by working to attract potential high growth, high performance enterprises, in turn generating high wage jobs. ECBII provides facility and resources to both start-up and operational small

⁸⁷ http://www.nashcc.edu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=183&Itemid=371

⁸⁸ <http://www.rmecdc.org/busDevCenter.html>

businesses and technology companies and offers a 5,500 sq. ft. Conference and Training Center with seating capacity up to 275 persons.⁸⁹

The Twin Counties' public school systems offer some assets to help build local human capital. Edgecombe County has six elementary schools (including one Montessori school), four middle schools, four high schools (including one "early college" school), and one alternative school for grades 6-12.⁹⁰ Nash-Rocky Mount has 16 elementary schools, five middle schools, five high schools (including one "early college" school), and one alternative school for grades 6-12.⁹¹ Additionally, there is one charter school in Rocky Mount-Nash County system, Rocky Mount Prep, which serves grades K-12 and focuses on preparing students for college.⁹² In addition to the public, alternative, and charter schools, there are several private preparatory schools in the Twin Counties area, including Cornerstone Christian Academy,⁹³ Faith Christian School,⁹⁴ Falls Road Baptist Church School,⁹⁵ Mt. Zion Christian

⁸⁹ <http://www.rmecdc.org/commercialDevelopment.html>

⁹⁰ <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/search.jsp?pYear=2009-2010&pList=1&pListVal=330%3AEdgecombe+County+Public+School&GO2=GO>

⁹¹ <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/search.jsp?pYear=2009-2010&pList=1&pListVal=640%3ANash-Rocky+Mount+Schools++++++&GO2=GO>

⁹² <http://www.rockymountprep.org/>

⁹³ <http://www.superpages.com/bp/Rocky-Mount-NC/Cornerstone-Christian-Academy-L0117391524.htm>

⁹⁴ <http://www.fcspatriots.com/>

⁹⁵ <http://fallsroadbaptist.org/pages/html0s/00245.2.623823615212969475>

Academy,⁹⁶ Our Lady of Perpetual Help Catholic School,⁹⁷ Rocky Mount Academy,⁹⁸ and Tarboro-Edgecombe Academy.⁹⁹

In the region's public schools, ABC test scores appear to be rising, which is a good sign in terms of the schools' role in preparing the future workforce. In 2009-10, 75% of Edgecombe County's middle schools made expected growth and all of its high schools made high growth. In Nash-Rocky Mount, 50% of elementary schools made expected growth and 31% made high growth; 20% of middle schools made expected growth and 60% made high growth; and 60% of high schools made high growth. In Edgecombe County, 25% of high schools were recognized as Schools of Distinction. In Nash-Rocky Mount, 19% of elementary schools and 20% of high schools were recognized as Schools of Distinction. To qualify as a School of Distinction, 80 to 89 percent of students must test at or above Level III and the school must make expected or high growth.¹⁰⁰

The area's school systems seem in line with state averages in hiring fully licensed teachers – 97% of elementary teachers in both school systems are fully licensed (98% state); 90% of Edgecombe and 95% of Nash-Rocky Mount middle

⁹⁶ <http://maps.google.com/maps/place?hl=en&rls=GGLD,GGLD:2004-34,GGLD:en&um=1&ie=UTF-8&q=mt.+zion+christian+academy+rocky+mount&fb=1&gl=us&hq=mt.+zion+christian+academy&hnear=Rocky+Mt,+NC&cid=12563647729299881655>

⁹⁷ <http://schooljoom.olphrm.com/index.php>

⁹⁸ <http://www.rmacademy.com/rockymountacademy/site/default.asp>

⁹⁹ <http://www.greatschools.org/north-carolina/tarboro/2163-Tarboro-Edgecombe-Academy/>

¹⁰⁰ <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/servlet/srcCreatePDF?pLEACode=330&pYear=2009-2010&pDataType=1>

school teachers are fully licensed (92% state); and 91% of Edgecombe and 90% of Nash-Rocky Mount high school teachers are fully licensed (92% for state). In addition, all of the elementary school teachers and nearly all of middle and high school teachers in Edgecombe are highly qualified (99%); in Nash-Rocky Mount, all of the elementary teachers (100% state), 98% of middle school teachers (97% state), and 96% of high school teachers (96% state) are highly qualified.

The Twin Counties Region has developed a network of high quality health care providers. Collectively, they constitute major assets for business recruitment and retention, as well as attracting individual and families to the area.

Several hospitals provide health care in the Twin Counties region. Nash Health Care Systems¹⁰¹, which includes Nash General Hospital, Nash Day Hospital, and Coastal Plain Hospital and Counseling Center, is the largest and most technologically advanced. Nash General Hospital, a 282-bed facility, is the primary health care provider for both Nash and Edgecombe counties. In addition to an array of traditional hospital services and emergency care, Nash General Hospital houses a Women's Center, Cardiovascular Services, and Critical Care Unit. Additionally, the hospital offers specialty orthopedic care through the Nash Joint Replacement Center, heartburn care through the Nash Heartburn Treatment Center, bariatric care through the Nash Surgical Weight Loss Center and addresses sleep issues through the Nash Sleep Disorders Center. It also offers hospice care.¹⁰² Nash Day Hospital

¹⁰¹ <http://www.nhcs.org/>

¹⁰² http://www.nhcs.org/hospitals/nash_general

offers outpatient services such as radiology, endoscopy, rehabilitation, minor surgery, wound care, and cancer treatment through the Nash Cancer Treatment Center.¹⁰³ Coastal Plain Hospital provides inpatient care for behavioral health services.¹⁰⁴

Nash Health Care Systems also operates the Bryant T. Aldrige Rehabilitation Center, a 45,000 square foot facility featuring a therapeutic swimming pool, walking garden, gymnasium, and more, which helps patients recovering from brain trauma, stroke, joint replacement, spinal injury, or similar conditions.¹⁰⁵ It also operates the HealthFirst Wellness Center, a medically-based outpatient rehabilitative and wellness center, which provides cardiac rehabilitation, pulmonary rehabilitation, corporate wellness and disease management services, and fitness training;¹⁰⁶ and the recently-opened Nash Breast Cancer Center, which provides a range of services to breast cancer patients, including PET-CT scan, MRI, digital mammography, high definition ultrasound, bone densitometry, ultrasound biopsy, stereotactic biopsy, pathology specimen processing and community outreach.¹⁰⁷ A personal RN Breast Health Navigator Nurse guides each patient through screening, diagnosis, treatment and recovery, drawing upon the expertise and support of radiologists, mammography

¹⁰³ http://www.nhcs.org/hospitals/nash_day

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.nhcs.org/services/mental-health>

¹⁰⁵ http://www.nhcs.org/hospitals/aldrige_rehabilitation

¹⁰⁶ <http://www.nhcs.org/facilities/healthfirst-wellness-center>

¹⁰⁷ http://www.nhcs.org/hospitals/nash_breast_care_center

technologists, ultrasound technologists, surgeons, and other medical support personnel.

Heritage Hospital, located in Tarboro, also provides health care in the Twin Counties Region. It is a full-service, 117-bed fully accredited acute care facility which is part of the University Health Systems of Eastern North Carolina and East Carolina University School of Medicine. It houses the Special Beginnings Family Birthing Center, where board-certified obstetricians and pediatricians use the latest neonatal technologies in high risk pregnancies, and a Level III intermediate care nursery, which provides special care for babies with severe health challenges. The center also offers pregnancy wellness workshops, breast feeding support, and infant/child CPR classes.¹⁰⁸

Another unit housed in the facility, The Heritage Hospital Cancer Center, delivers university-level cancer care in a home-like, family setting. The center staff includes oncologists (cancer specialists) from the Leo W. Jenkins Cancer Center at East Carolina University and specially trained oncology nurses, as well as nutritionists and a dedicated pharmacy team. Other specialty services provided at Heritage Hospital include same day surgery center, critical care unit, rehabilitation therapy services, pain management, chronic heart failure clinic, orthopedic services and a 24-hour emergency department.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.uhseast.com/heritage/servicesdetail.aspx?id=3617>

¹⁰⁹ <http://www.uhseast.com/heritage/dynamic-detail.aspx?id=430>

LifeCare Hospitals of North Carolina, located in Rocky Mount, has 50 licensed beds and a medical staff of more than 39 physicians. It is a Medicare-certified facility, accredited by The Joint Commission and the College of American Pathologists, which specializes in the treatment of medically complex patients who require extended hospitalization. Typical treatment teams include physicians, nurses, pharmacists, nutritionists, and therapists from a range of disciplines — physical, speech, occupational, respiratory, recreational, and psychological.

Community Hospital of Rocky Mount is another Medicare certified medical facility in the Twin Counties area. With 50 Medicare-certified beds, this is a short term community care facility.¹¹⁰

The Boice-Willis Clinic also serves the Twin Counties Region. One of the largest and oldest multi-specialty "physician-owned" practices in eastern North Carolina, the Clinic is comprised of over 60 physicians representing 16 medical specialties. In addition, the clinic offer several ancillary services, including a full service, Medicare-certified and accredited laboratory facility, an accredited imaging and specialty medicine facility, an accredited Endoscopy facility, a women's imaging center, physical therapy services unit, and a health and diabetes education department.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ <http://www.hospital-data.com/hospitals/COMMUNITY-HOSPITAL-OF-ROCKY-MOUNT-RO647.html>

¹¹¹ <http://www.boice-willis.com/default.htm>

Two public health departments serve the residents of the Twin Counties Region. One is located in Edgecombe County and the other in Nash County.

The Edgecombe County Health Department provides clinical health services to residents of Edgecombe. The Department's General Clinic offers testing for high blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol, as well as physicals examinations, including PAP Smears, pelvic examinations, and various other tests. Immunizations and free STD testing and treatment for reportable sexually transmitted diseases is also offered.¹¹² The Department's Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) offers Breast & Cervical Cancer screening and mammogram referrals for women age 40 and over or with personal history of breast cancer. Its Family Planning Clinic offers health exams, birth control information and methods. And the Department's Maternity Clinic offers exams, health care, and education to pregnant women.¹¹³

The Edgecombe County Public Health Department offers a range of services for children, including immunizations, orthopedic treatment regimes to correct disorders of the bones and muscles, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding education and support for qualified children up to age five, and comprehensive dental services.¹¹⁴

¹¹² <http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/health/adults.aspx>

¹¹³ <http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/health/women.aspx>

¹¹⁴ <http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/health/children.aspx>

Like the Edgecombe department, the Nash County Health Department offers a variety of clinical services for children, including immunizations, primary care, well-child care from birth to age 5,¹¹⁵ and a dental health program.¹¹⁶ Other services provided by the Nash County Health Department include family planning, pregnancy testing, prenatal care, childbirth classes, women's health screenings, and WIC.

The Twin Counties Region is endowed with an array of cultural capital assets which can be leveraged in the economic development marketplace. One such asset is the Nash County Farmer's Market, which opened in 2005 in an effort to increase consumption of local foods, build relationships between farmers and consumers, create a community gathering place, and help traditional tobacco farmers diversify their crop base. Tim Bass, a grower who was instrumental in leading the market's development, states, "'The market has enabled us to stay on the farm. It's about keeping farmers on the farm.'" His biggest-selling item is greenhouse tomatoes. After his family got out of the tobacco business in the mid- 1990s, Bass said, "we took an old tobacco greenhouse and started with greenhouse tomatoes, and then we did so well we built a new one."¹¹⁷

The Edgecombe County Cultural Arts Council¹¹⁸ and Nash County Arts Council¹¹⁹ are two additional cultural capital assets in the region. These

¹¹⁵ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us/Departments/HealthDepartment/ClinicalServices/ChildHealthServices.aspx>

¹¹⁶ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us/Departments/HealthDepartment/DentalHealth.aspx>

¹¹⁷ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us/EmployeesNewsResources/FarmersMarket.aspx>

¹¹⁸ <http://www.edgecombearts.org/index.htm>

organizations support area artists and provide cultural performance offerings for the community.

Museums in the area include the Imperial Centre for the Arts and Sciences, located in a former tobacco factory in Rocky Mount. It houses the Rocky Mount Arts Center as well as the Children's Museum, Science Center, and the Cummins Planetarium, the first digital planetarium in the state.¹²⁰ The Rocky Mount Living History Museum is located in the Cobb-Massengill House and illustrates the daily life in the year 1791.¹²¹ The Twin County Hall of Fame is located in the Old Train Depot in Rocky Mount, and honor citizens of Edgecombe and Nash Counties who have made broad and lasting contributions to the community.¹²²

The Twin Counties Region has ample facilities for meetings and cultural activities. Most notable include the Dunn Center for the Performing Arts, which includes the 1,200 seat Minges Auditorium, the intimate Powers Recital Hall, and several galleries including the Mims Gallery.¹²³ The Fleming Building is a 70,000 square foot, two-story facility containing both academic space and facility rental space, including the Mobley Atrium and the 1,029 seat Keihin Auditorium.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ <http://nasharts.org/aboutus.aspx>

¹²⁰ www.imperialcentre.org

¹²¹ <http://www.rockymountmuseum.com/>

¹²² <http://www.twincountymuseum.com/>

¹²³ <http://www.ncwc.edu/dunncenter>

¹²⁴ http://www.edgecombe.edu/ac_and_t_center/about_ac_and_t.htm

Two libraries--The Edgecombe County Memorial Library and Braswell Memorial Library (in Nash County)--serve the Twin Counties Region. In addition, four local newspapers cover local news and events: *The Daily Southerner*¹²⁵ (Tarboro), *Nashville Graphic*,¹²⁶ the *Rocky Mount Telegram*,¹²⁷ and the *Spring Hope Enterprise*.¹²⁸ In addition, there are numerous locations that are ideal for recreational activities and social events. These include the Jack Laugherty Park, which houses the Rocky Mount Veterans Memorial, the Martin Luther King Jr. Park, the R.M. Wilson Gym and the South Rocky Mount Community Center and Park.

Smaller parks and community facilities also abound in the community and offer sports fields and playground equipment.¹²⁹ The Rocky Mount Sports Complex, for example, features six youth baseball fields, four softball fields, a championship baseball field, two concession areas with bathrooms, umpire lounges, electronic scoreboards, two outdoor basketball courts, horseshoe pits, and a walking trail.¹³⁰ The Denton Street Pool is another major cultural amenity, which features eight 25-yard competitive lanes, zero-depth entry, spray-ground elements, water slides, diving boards, and a state-of-the-art bath house, including a family dressing area.

¹²⁵ <http://dailysoutherner.com/>

¹²⁶ <http://www.nashvillegraphic.com/>

¹²⁷ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/>

¹²⁸ <http://springhopeenterprise.com/>

¹²⁹ <http://www.rockymountnc.gov/parks/parks.html>

¹³⁰ www.rockymountsportscomplex.com

Elaborating on the area's cultural assets, Eddie Baysden, President of the Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce, stated that the area has cultural offerings that are "second to none in the country for a town this size."¹³¹ Edgecombe County has 36 listings on the National Register of Historic Places,¹³² and Nash County has 28, including the Tarboro town common,¹³³ which is the only remaining planned town common in the United States outside of Boston.

Finally, two types of social capital assets stand out in the Twin Counties region. One set benefit the areas' growing senior population. The other set serves the region's youth population.

Several community resources create bridging social capital assets for the region's growing population of senior citizens. The Rocky Mount Senior Center houses a swimming pool, gym, kitchen, game room, two exercise rooms, arts and crafts room, library, computer room, TV room and meeting rooms. Shuffleboard, Bocce, and Horse Shoe courts are also available and a small park with a 1/5 mile walking trail is located across the street. The Senior Center has activities such as athletic leagues, educational seminars, trips, volunteer opportunities, bingo and special events.¹³⁴

¹³¹ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56341>

¹³² <http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/NC/Edgecombe/state.html>

¹³³ <http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/NC/Nash/state.html>

¹³⁴ <http://www.rockymountnc.gov/parks/senior.html>

In Tarboro, the E.L. Roberson Senior Recreation Center offers a variety of programs and opportunities for seniors, providing arts and crafts, a woodworking shop, greenhouse, aquatics and fitness activities, meals program, multi-purpose room for shows and small theater productions, educational programs, game room, library, travel clubs, social, medical, and legal services and outdoor patio areas.¹³⁵ The Nash County Aging Department offers services such as luncheons, line dancing, billiard tournaments, fitness and personal training, aerobics, computer classes and Wii sports.¹³⁶ Retirement communities, such as Ford's Colony¹³⁷ and the Fountains at the Albemarle¹³⁸ offer additional resources for area seniors.

There are several noteworthy mediating institutions in the Twin Counties Region that strive to promote pro-social behaviors and healthy living among local youth. These include the Harrison Family YMCA,¹³⁹ the Boys and Girls Club of Nash/Edgecombe Counties,¹⁴⁰ Youth on Mission,¹⁴¹ the Rocky Mount Evening Optimist Club,¹⁴² and the Rocky Mount Area Youth Soccer Association.¹⁴³ There

¹³⁵ <http://www.historictarboro.com/visittarboro.htm>

¹³⁶ <http://www.co.nash.nc.us/>

¹³⁷ www.fordscolony.com

¹³⁸ <http://www.watermarkcommunities.com/albemarle/>

¹³⁹ www.rmymca.org

¹⁴⁰ www.bgcnc.org

¹⁴¹ <http://www.yom.org/>

¹⁴² www.ncoptimist.com

¹⁴³ www.rockymountsoccer.com

are also 285 religious and faith-based organizations in the Rocky Mount MSA which also contribute significantly to child and youth development.¹⁴⁴

Weaknesses

As illustrated above, the Twin Counties Region has a significant number of strengths that make it attractive as a place to live and do business. There are, however, several areas of weakness that adversely affect the region's competitiveness in the economic development marketplace. The high unemployment rates, declining population,¹⁴⁵ and low tax base are often cited¹⁴⁶ as the major factors affecting the area's economy, but there are several additional issues of note.

Standing on the outside looking in, the region's approach to economic development appears a bit chaotic, even schizophrenic. Simply put, it is difficult to determine what the region wants to be when it grows up. Will it be recognized in the global marketplace as a logistics and distribution hub, an advanced manufacturing center situated in a proposed technology corridor, a food processing center, or a life sciences cluster? To be sure, a diverse economic base is the key to surviving in the highly volatile global economy of the 21st century, but the economic development strategy must build upon the region's competitive advantages, and it is not clear that the Twin Counties Region either has existing strengths or is capable of developing economic capacity in some of these areas.

¹⁴⁴ http://www.usachurch.com/north_carolina/rocky_mount/churches.htm

¹⁴⁵ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37065.html>

¹⁴⁶ http://www.edgecombcountync.gov/client_resources/mar-08.pdf

Inconsistency of information available across county government web sites is a major weakness in the region's polity capital asset base. While the Carolinas Gateway Partnership provides a comprehensive economic development web site presence for the region, county government web sites are quite the opposite. And, while the Nash County and Edgecombe County web sites have some areas of strength, there are areas of significant weakness as well.

An example from the Edgecombe County web site is illustrative of the problem. While the site has some attractive photographs, the site¹⁴⁷ overall has an awkward layout and does not have a polished, professional look. Much of the information available is not intuitively easy to follow and the site's information and links appear disorganized. Additionally, the site is lacking key information online viewers most likely seek. Commissioners' meeting minutes are not available online, nor are applications for business permits. Absence of commissioners' notes is often viewed as a lack of desired government transparency.

It is also noteworthy that the economic development page does not link to the Carolinas Gateway Partnership web site and very little information is available on the County's tourism web page. This may be due, in part or whole, to the fact that Edgecombe County does not appear to have any tourism presence or a visitor's bureau. A "Sustainable Tourism Plan" was developed in 2008,¹⁴⁸ and is available on

¹⁴⁷ <http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/>

¹⁴⁸ http://www.edgecombecountync.gov/client_resources/econdeve/edgecombe%20co-tourism-development%20-plan.pdf

the Edgecombe County home page, but it does not appear that this plan has been implemented. In fact, the first steps in the plan are to put together a Tourism Development Authority and develop a tourism web site, neither of which appears to have been accomplished.

As previously mentioned, there are three local Chambers of Commerce in the Twin Counties Region: The Rocky Mount Area Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.rockymountchamber.org>), The Tarboro-Edgecombe Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.tarborochamber.com/>) and the Spring Hope Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.springhopechamber.com/>). The web sites for these three entities vary widely in terms of the quality and consistency of the content, ease of navigation, and links to other sites.

The Rocky Mount Chamber's web site effectively promotes the entire area, including not only the city of Rocky Mount but also places of interest in Edgecombe and Nash Counties. However, the information provided for each county is inconsistent. For example, under "Education," the web site offers information regarding the community colleges in each county, but only lists the K-12 schools in Nash County. The Tarboro-Edgecombe Chamber's web site does little to promote the area at all, but focuses more on Chamber business, and does not seem inclusive of the area outside of Edgecombe County. The Spring Hope Chamber's web site gives a localized view of the town of Spring Hope and does not offer much information beyond the activities that take place there.

In general it seems that each chamber only promotes its own activities with little to no coordination or joint promotion with the others. While it is true that a Chamber's mission is to promote its own territory the fragmented view of the region portrayed through these web sites gives citizens and visitors alike the perception that the community is not united or cohesive.

Poorly coordinated web sites send a message to the public that the counties, cities and economic groups that make up the Twin Counties Region do not place a value on maintaining an integrated community. If the Twin Counties Region is to be seen as a highly integrated region, then marketing and economic development officials need to be consistent in the information they provide regarding the region, web sites need to be kept up-to-date, and there needs to be a coordinated effort amongst all community organizations to create a cohesive, rather than fragmented, picture of the area. If new businesses (and jobs) are to be attracted to the Twin Counties, current, timely, accurate, and consistent information for the area as a whole should be seamlessly available.

Education is another area that needs improvement in order to prepare the workforce and attract jobs to the Twin Counties area. According to the U.S. Census, only 65.6% of Edgecombe County residents and 75.6% of Nash County residents over age 25 hold high school degrees, compared to the statewide rate of 78.1%. Only 8.5%

of Edgecombe County residents and 17.2% of Nash County residents have a Bachelor's degree, compared to 22.5% of the residents of the state.^{149, 150}

While the school districts are making some progress, as described above, they are also grappling with declining enrollment and poor test scores. In the 2009-10 school year, none of the elementary, only 25% of middle, and only half of the high schools in Edgecombe County made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). Also, 50% of Edgecombe's elementary schools are in Title 1 improvement status, meaning that they have not met AYP goals for two or more years.¹⁵¹ In Nash-Rocky Mount Schools, only 24% of elementary, none of the middle, and 60% of high schools made AYP in 2009-10. Forty-one percent of Nash County's elementary schools are in Title 1 improvement status.¹⁵²

According to the State's ABC Accountability report, 33% of elementary schools in Edgecombe County were designated as priority schools and 33% were designated as low performing in 2009-10, meaning that less than 50% of the school children tested at grade level and the school did not make expected growth. None of the elementary schools met expected growth for the year. While three-quarters of middle schools met expected growth, 75% were also classified as priority schools, meaning

¹⁴⁹ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37065.html>

¹⁵⁰ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37127.html>

¹⁵¹ <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/servlet/srcICreatePDF?pLEACode=330&pYear=2009-2010&pDataType=1>

¹⁵² <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/servlet/srcICreatePDF?pLEACode=640&pYear=2009-2010&pDataType=1>

that only 50-59% of students tested at grade level.¹⁵³ In the Nash-Rocky Mount school system, 19% of the elementary schools and 20% of the middle schools were designated as priority schools in 2009-10.¹⁵⁴

Overall, SAT scores in both school systems still fall short of the North Carolina statewide average. In 2010 the overall average score for Edgecombe County was 1280 and for Nash-Rocky Mount was 1394, compared to the statewide average of 1485 (Table 15). Even more revealing, only 38.5% of Edgecombe's graduating seniors took the SAT in 2010, which was slightly below the testing rate in 2008 (42.5%) and slightly above the rate in 2009 (37.1%). In Nash-Rocky Mount, 47.8% of graduating seniors took the SAT in 2010--above both the 2008 (44.2%) and 2009 (41.5%) test taking rates. For the sake of comparison, North Carolina's SAT test taking rate was 63% in each year between 2008 and 2010.¹⁵⁵

Table 15: SAT Scores for Edgecombe and Nash Counties, 2010

	Math Score	CR Score	Writing Score	M+CR	M+CR+W
Edgecombe County	443	429	408	872	1280
Nash County	491	465	438	956	1394
North Carolina	511	497	477	1008	1485

Source; NC Report Cards.

¹⁵³ <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/servlet/srcICreatePDF?pLEACode=330&pYear=2009-2010&pDataType=1>

¹⁵⁴ <http://www.ncreportcards.org/src/servlet/srcICreatePDF?pLEACode=640&pYear=2009-2010&pDataType=1>

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/accountability/reporting/sat/2010/satreport2010.pdf>

On a per-student basis, according to the 2009-10 school report card, both the Edgecombe County (\$5874 and \$1680, respectively) and the Nash-Rocky Mount school districts (\$5467 and \$1536, respectively) received more state and federal funding than the average North Carolina school district (\$5225 and \$1275, respectively). But Edgecombe (\$916) and Nash (\$1523) counties contributed significantly less per student in local funds than other North Carolina counties (\$1946). Given this disparate funding pattern, it will be difficult to improve educational outcomes for Twin Counties Region young people, particularly in view of impending budget cuts at all levels of government.

Manifestations of racial inequality in the Twin Counties Region are a major deterrent to economic growth and development. Indeed, the racial divide seems to be an underlying issue throughout many aspects of life in the Twin Counties area. Within the city of Rocky Mount it is physically manifested with the railroad tracks dividing the city along racial lines. The Nash County side of the tracks is perceived as the “white side”, while the Edgecombe County side of the tracks is the “black side.”¹⁵⁶

Moreover, it appears that racism is so deeply institutionalized in the area, that jobs can be lost over protesting discriminatory acts. In one case, an assistant high school football coach overheard another assistant coach make a racist comment to a player. When he attempted to have the issue addressed, first with the principal and later with the superintendent, nothing was done. He and two other assistant coaches

¹⁵⁶ <http://www.gq.com/news-politics/big-issues/201006/serial-killer-girls-rocky-mount-north-carolina?currentPage=2#ixzz14okw0gre>

that had stood by him were later relieved of their volunteer coaching positions. "We faithfully worked with these kids and tried to keep structure for five to six months," said one of the assistant coaches that was let go. "The (athletic director) just came to us and plainly said: 'They don't want y'all out here anymore.'" ¹⁵⁷ Strengthening race relations is a much-needed anchor for building a stronger economy within the city, said U.S. Rep. G.K. Butterfield, D-1st District. ¹⁵⁸

Gang activity appears to be on the rise in the Twin Counties Region and thus is another area of concern. According to a 2010 report, 41 gangs are known to be operating in Edgecombe County and three in Nash County. ¹⁵⁹ Bob Cox, head of the gang investigations unit in the Tarboro Police Department, said that at several community events where he had set up his gang display, the youngest children were among those who were best able to describe various gang affiliations and identify the people in police gang photos. "The kids are very aware," he said. "At one event, the young kids knew the hand signs." ¹⁶⁰ Because of the levels of gang activity, the Rocky Mount police department has installed surveillance systems with night vision capabilities to allow indirect covert surveillance and intelligence gathering, as well as

¹⁵⁷ <http://www.wral.com/news/local/story/111857/>

¹⁵⁸ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/features/leaders-say-components-growth-are-place-118635>

¹⁵⁹ <http://www.ncgccd.org/pdfs/pubs/2010gangreport.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ <http://dailysoutherner.com/homepage/x1243791031/GANGS-IN-TARBORO>

recording of gang activities to make a more credible account of events for use in the investigation and prosecution of criminal gang activity.¹⁶¹

Unhealthy lifestyles are also a deterrent to economic growth and development in the Twin Counties Region. In Edgecombe County, for example, 30% of adults smoke, 38% are obese, and 9% engage in binge drinking. In Nash County, 23% of adults smoke, 32% are obese, and 11% engage in binge drinking. The incidence of Chlamydia—a sexually transmitted disease—is 873 and 469 per 100,000 females in Edgecombe and Nash counties, respectively, while the statewide rate is 346/100,000 females. The teen birth rate is much higher in Edgecombe (74 birth per 1000 females aged 15-19) and Nash (55 births per 1000 females aged 15-19) counties than in the state as a whole (51 births/1000 females aged 15-19).¹⁶² Currently, 29% of children in Edgecombe and Nash counties are obese or overweight before they reach kindergarten.¹⁶³

In part as a function of these unhealthy lifestyles and behaviors,

- Among the state's 100 counties, Edgecombe ranks 94th for community health and for mortality¹⁶⁴, while Nash County ranks 61st for community health and 79th for mortality.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶¹ <http://www.ncgccd.org/pdfs/2009/gangga.pdf>

¹⁶² <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/north-carolina/nash>

¹⁶³ <http://www.rwjf.org/pr/product.jsp?id=53477>

¹⁶⁴ <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/north-carolina/edgecombe>

¹⁶⁵ <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/north-carolina/nash>

- Compared to 19% of all North Carolinians, twenty-seven percent of Edgecombe County residents and 20% Nash County residents report being in poor health.
- The incidence of low birth weight babies (<2500 grams) and fetal deaths are higher in Edgecombe (12.6% and 16%, respectively) and Nash (9.4% and 12.7%) than in the state (9.0% and 6.7%).¹⁶⁶
- Life expectancy at birth is much lower in Edgecombe and Nash counties than in the state as a whole. (As Table 16 shows, this is the case for all births, white births, black births, male births, and female births.) In fact, Edgecombe has the lowest life expectancy rate at birth in the state.¹⁶⁷

Table 16: Life Expectancy at Birth in North Carolina, Edgecombe County, and Nash County

Demographic Group	North Carolina	Edgecombe County	Nash County
All	77.3	72.4	75.7
White	78.1	74.6	77.6
Black	73.8	70.8	72.0
Male	74.5	68.4	72.6
Female	80.0	76.2	78.7

Source: SCHS.

¹⁶⁶ <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/databook/CD11%20fetal%20death%20rates.html>

¹⁶⁷ <http://www.schs.state.nc.us/SCHS/data/lifexpectancy/>

According to a 2008 report by Be Active North Carolina, the economic cost of unhealthy lifestyles (including the risk factors of diabetes, depression, excess weight, physical inactivity, abnormal blood lipid level, low fruit & vegetable intake, and tobacco use) among adults in Edgecombe County is over \$84 million annually. This includes both direct medical expenses and indirect costs such as lost productivity, absenteeism and presenteeism. The direct medical cost of unhealthy lifestyles among youth in Edgecombe County is over \$122,000 annually. If trends continue, the current group of inactive and overweight youth in Edgecombe County will incur medical care and lost productivity costs of nearly \$172 million by the mid-point of their working years (mid-40s) and nearly \$1.6 billion by the time they retire. The economic cost of unhealthy lifestyles among adults in Nash County is nearly \$149 million annually, and among youth is over \$192,000 annually. Youth in Nash County could incur costs of over \$285 million by the mid-point of their working years and over \$2.5 billion by the time they retire.¹⁶⁸

The high cost of electricity is unquestionably one of the greatest deterrents to future economic growth and development in the Twin Counties Region. The non-competitive electric utility rate structure increases the cost of doing business and adversely impact the bottom line of existing businesses, makes the region less attractive to companies looking to relocate, and adversely affects both the new construction and resale residential markets. And it appears that little is being done to address the problem.

¹⁶⁸ http://209.200.69.140/downloads/Tipping_the_Scales.pdf

In the 1980s, area municipalities facing projected electricity shortages joined Electricities, an electricity co-op, to ensure a stable energy source. Approved by the N.C. General Assembly, Electricities provided energy as projected until Hurricane Floyd caused major flooding in the region in 1999. Soon after the flood and in conjunction with numerous other causes, electricity consumption dropped in Eastern North Carolina. The loss of several manufacturing facilities, which used large amounts of electricity, was partly responsible for the drop in demand. But the debt associated with ElectriCities remained, resulting in increased prices per user. As businesses have relocated out of the ElectriCities grid, the burden per user has increased even more. In fact the high cost of electricity may directly affect economic development efforts, as energy-intensive businesses may choose to locate elsewhere outside of the ElectriCities grid where electricity is less expensive.¹⁶⁹

The high cost of electricity also affects residential customers. Rocky Mount resident Cynthia Jahi complains that “our bills in Rocky Mount are grossly unjust...people in Rocky Mount have suffered since Floyd.”¹⁷⁰ Jahi said 1,200 people have signed a petition asking for a reduction in electric rates and that Rocky Mount’s debt as a member of North Carolina Eastern Municipal Power Agency (NCEMPA) be forgiven, since residents played no role in decisions in the 1980s that led to the formation of the public-power agency. Jahi represents Utilities Working Group of the People’s Assembly, a grassroots community group. Jahi told the NCEMPA board

¹⁶⁹ <http://lightbill.wordpress.com/2010/04/02/the-way-out-of-ncempa-electricities/>

¹⁷⁰ <http://lightbill.wordpress.com/2010/02/24/ncempa-meeting/>

some customers are receiving monthly utility bills that exceed \$1,000. Residents are also experiencing high bills even after homes have been weatherized and during vacations when the electricity usage is lower than normal, she said.¹⁷¹

Fueling part of the growing concern about utility rates is a new increase in the storm water fee. Blair Hinkle, assistant director of Public Works for the City of Rocky Mount, says the 50 cent increase is necessary to pay for capital projects, upgrades to the current system, and general maintenance. “Before 2003, everything was funded from the general fund, but once we realized the full impact of the requirements for our National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit, everybody realized we needed to have a dedicated funding source,” he said. “A citizen’s advisory group came together and came up with two options: continue funding from the general fund or establish a storm water utility fund. They decided the most equitable way to do it was through a utility fund.”

After that, everyone had \$3.25 per equivalent residential unit (ERU) added to their monthly utility bill and in 2006, it was raised to \$3.75 per ERU. Each home is charged for one ERU while multi-family, commercial and industrial properties are charged for the actual amount of their impervious area. Hinkle said the city is required by the state to have the NPDES permit, but with that comes extensive

¹⁷¹ <http://lightbill.wordpress.com/2010/02/24/ncempa-meeting/>

requirements.¹⁷² With utilities already being an area of contention in the Rocky Mount area, this may further exacerbate the situation.

Crime is another major weakness or deterrent to economic growth and development in the Twin Counties Region. On a scale from one to ten, with ten being the highest, the Rocky Mount MSA rates as a six in terms of violent crimes, Edgecombe County rates a six, and Nash County rates a seven. The US Average is four.¹⁷³

Finally, Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs) – land-uses that are typically perceived to have an adverse affect on property values or otherwise detract from the attractiveness of the community as a place to live and do business – constitute yet another weakness. Most notable in this regard are the 14 Brownfield sites identified in Edgecombe County and 25 in Nash County.¹⁷⁴

Opportunities

Several areas of opportunity exist to promote and facilitate economic development in the Twin Counties. The opportunities are based largely on the strengths of the community, including an aggressive economic development strategy, available industrial parks, and a pro-business climate, all of which have resulted in

¹⁷² <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/uncategorized/city-fee-increase-necessary-63463>

¹⁷³ http://www.bestplaces.net/metro/Rocky%20Mount-North_Carolina.aspx#

¹⁷⁴ http://portal.ncdenr.org/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=bc36cebd-0da1-4199-be4c-1044a7f1343c&groupId=38361

numerous planned projects coming to the region that could generate significant revenue and bring additional jobs.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity is to continue the momentum that created the Twin Counties Region initiative in the first instance. Without sustained momentum, the region will not be able to take advantage of any of the other opportunities that exist to propel the region forward.

Given that the World Wide Web constitutes literally and figuratively a window to the world at relatively low cost, a unique opportunity exists to improve web-based economic development marketing of the Twin Counties region. In order to effectively leverage the power, influence, and global reach of the web, Twin Counties Region's websites must be better coordinated and linked with timely, consistent, and up to date information. The Edgecombe County web site should link to the Carolinas Gateway Partnership on its economic development page and provide more information on tourism in the area. Marketing efforts should be coordinated among all entities, particularly on area web sites, to highlight all of the area's capital assets. Government, business, city, tourist and economic development organizations need to come together to create a unified view of the Twin Counties for both residents and businesses alike. Groups also need to coordinate their web sites to make certain the information presented is cohesive, inclusive and regularly updated.

Above and beyond improving web-based economic development marketing, a unique opportunity also exists for The Twin Counties Region to take control of its own public image in the global marketplace. Both area leaders and residents are well

aware of the negative image of the area that has been played out in the national press, which has influenced opinions of the area as a place to live and do business. Press coverage has ranged from the sensationalism of area crime to the schizophrenic rankings of the area in national publications.

In 2010, for example, an article appeared in *Gentlemen's Quarterly* about a possible serial killer in the Twin Counties Region, which painted the area as a racially divisive region of the state.¹⁷⁵ A year earlier *Forbes* ranked the Rocky Mount MSA as one of the most impoverished areas in the country.¹⁷⁶ In 2008, the Milken Institute ranked the area number one in high-tech growth and listed it as one of America's best performing cities in that year,¹⁷⁷ while in 2009 *Forbes* ranked Rocky Mount as one of the best places to do business.¹⁷⁸

Starkly contrasting media coverage of this type creates a marketing challenge for the community. While it may seem that this is well beyond the control of the local community, much can be gained from a positive marketing campaign. The community has started this to a degree with the "I Love Rocky Mount" campaign. While this is a great idea for building a sense of community within the area, additional efforts should be made to impact the external public perception of the Twin Counties, as well as to enhance diversity and race relations within the region.

¹⁷⁵ <http://www.gq.com/news-politics/big-issues/201006/serial-killer-girls-rocky-mount-north-carolina>

¹⁷⁶ <http://www.forbes.com/2009/10/12/most-impoverished-cities-business-beltway-poverty-cities.html>

¹⁷⁷ <http://bestcities.milkeninstitute.org/bestcities2009.taf?rankyear=2008&type=rank118&ID=665>

¹⁷⁸ http://www.forbes.com/lists/2009/5/bizplaces09_Rocky-Mount-NC_6191.html

Because many relocation decisions are made based on the quality of life in an area, negative public perception, regardless of its accuracy, can adversely impact economic development efforts.

The Twin Counties Region has embraced the conventional approach to economic development and has experienced moderate success in luring new companies to the region. But this approach has done little to overcome the geographical disparities that exist between Edgecombe and Nash counties, racial disparities that exist between whites and non-whites, and region wide disparities in health and social wellbeing. A unique opportunity therefore exists for local officials to simultaneously foster employment enhancing business development and improve the overall quality of life in the region by embracing an approach and strategies that fall under the broader rubric of sustainable community economic development. This approach is “broader than economic development because it includes community building and the improvement of community life beyond the purely economic.” CED, as this approach is popularly known,

“... has been commonly described as a quintessentially local [phenomenon], one in which communities reconstruct dysfunctional markets as a way of reconstructing social relations . . . building political strengths . . . [and] emphasiz[ing] local participation in the design and implementation of affordable housing, job creation, and finance programs.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁹ Roger Clay, Jr. and Susan R. Jones, editors, 2009, *Building Healthy Communities: A Guide to Community Economic Development for Advocates, Lawyers, and Policymakers*. American Bar Association.

CED embraces market-based approaches to poverty alleviation, job creation, and community development, “strategically aligning resources and assets to stay competitive in the global fight for capital and investment.”¹⁸⁰ Proponents of this global approach to community economic development advocate a focus on expanded pathways to opportunity for residents of marginalized communities and an agile and flexible system of governance and strategy development that is capable of responding to anticipated crises and opportunities in ways that are consistent with the triple bottom principles of sustainability.¹⁸¹

Within the context of this broader community economic development approach, an unique opportunity also exist to leverage the region’s existing demographic realities both to recruit talent and generate jobs. Demographically, the Twin Counties Region is rapidly aging and the prime working age population is at best experiencing slow growth. The demand for elder care services will increase sharply in the years ahead, creating enormous opportunities for new job generating entrepreneurial ventures aimed at serving the pressing needs of the region’s senior population.

There is an increasing tendency for the adult children and grandchildren of aging parents and grandparents to return to the region to assume elder care responsibilities--a trend popularly referred to as “home place migration.” An

¹⁸⁰ John A. Powell and Jason Reece, 2009, “Perspectives on CED in a Global Economy,” Chapter 2 in *Building Healthy Communities: A Guide to Community Economic Development for Advocates, Lawyers, and Policymakers*, edited by Roger Clay, Jr. and Susan R. Jones, American Bar Association, pp. 17-54.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

opportunity exist for Twin Counties officials to build upon this trend by aggressively recruiting homegrown talent who left the region earlier, have done well elsewhere, and have location-specific capital in the region in the form of aging parents and grandparents. Providing incentives for these kinds of individuals to return home--a people based strategy of community economic development-- could potentially go a long way toward addressing the region's pressing need for skilled labor. It is also an opportune time to embrace as a strategic imperative the diverse populations—Hispanics, Asians, and others--responsible for the region's net population growth in the past decade or so.

At the same time local officials develop strategies to recruit home grown talent and embrace diverse newcomers to the region, an opportunity exist to broaden workforce development efforts by developing a seamless web of K-20 education and training programs that build upon research on critical pathways to success in the pre-k, kindergarten, elementary, and middle school grades. The region has launched a host of program aimed at building stronger linkages among the region's high schools, community colleges, and four colleges to better prepare the local workforce for 21 century realities. But the general consensus that workforce challenges start much earlier in the life course and therefore young people will require sustained engagement throughout their formative years—pre-K through 20-- to be globally competitive in the future.

Commenting on the need to transform the region's labor pool in order to attract high tech firms, Chris Celtruda, a former supply chain manager for Honeywell International, said,

Transforming [the] work force is going to involve having the level of technical talent to manage a business like a Honeywell or like a Cummins, and that type of talent is really going to have to have a two- or four-year degree. I think you've got to start early. You've got to get into the elementary schools, middle schools, the high schools and really stress the math, the science and the leadership skills.¹⁸²

Stressing the importance of addressing education from the early years to affect development, Rocky Mount City Councilman Ruben Blackwell noted –correctly in our view—“If we don't deal with education, we might as well padlock our banks and shut down all our neighborhoods.”¹⁸³

An opportunity also exists to grow the Twin Counties Region's emergent food processing and distribution cluster. As John Gessaman, CEO and President of Carolinas Gateway Partnership, surmised, “Despite the challenges we have (with the economy), people are still going to eat. The basic needs are going to be with us. Also, the area has a pretty rich heritage in the way of food distribution and technology.”¹⁸⁴ Utilizing the existence of these companies in the area to lure other businesses in this industry sector could help grow the cluster and stimulate growth for the region.

¹⁸² <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/124669>

¹⁸³ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56341>

¹⁸⁴ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/news/food-distribution-businesses-cluster-around-regions-road-system-142749>

Given the impact of manufacturing job loss and capital flight on the Twin Counties Region, and opportunity exit to pursue additional Brownfield development and adaptive land reuse projects that could create a significant economic impact on the community. Reusing existing buildings helps preserve the urban infrastructure and minimizes sprawl. It reduces the overall environmental impact of construction activities and reduces waste. It also helps preserve a community's historical grounding, particularly if the building is a key community landmark or has high sentimental value.

Recognizing the value of such efforts, Rocky Mount City Councilman Andre Knight said,

If we are going to see our city grow, we have to reinvest in the area. We can't just focus on one area, either. We have to look at the city comprehensively. If we are going to sustain our community, first we are going to have to rebuild it, and we've started to do that with the inner city.

Noting the potential for redevelopment to have a broad impact on the area, Knight goes on to say, "We have areas that have been neglected for the last 40 or 50 years, but now we are creating a new landscape for private development and nonprofits to come in and create a stable community."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/120676>

A number of redevelopment tools and resources can be leveraged to facilitate future Brownfield redevelopment and adaptive reuse projects in the Twin Counties Regions, including Tax Increment Financing (TIF), Historic Rehabilitation Income Tax Credits, The New Markets Tax Credit (NMTC), Façade Incentive Grant Program, the Streetscape Program, North Carolina Main Street, the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Incentive Program, the Superfund Program and Brownfield Grants.

Further efforts should be undertaken to promote an entrepreneurial culture in the Twin Counties. The area has a history of producing “movers and shakers” in the business world, including Jim Gardner and Leonard Rawls, who opened the first Hardee’s franchise in 1961 in Rocky Mount. “Rocky Mount has always had a strong sense of entrepreneurship,” Rocky Mount Councilman Reuben Blackwell said, citing such large companies as Hardee’s, Centura Bank and Planters Bank, all of which started in the Rocky Mount area.¹⁸⁶

Several initiatives appear to be geared toward promoting small business development in the region. For example, Nash County Commissioner Fred Belfield said he is rallying for small businesses:

I’ve got one project where we are coming up with a plan for incentives and ways we can assist small businesses. We are just beginning to work on that, but hopefully, by the end of the year, we will have something in place because most of the statistics I’ve

¹⁸⁶ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56341>

seen show that small businesses nationally provide 80 percent of jobs here in America, and we can't continue to ignore small businesses.

Providing access to financial resources for entrepreneurs, by improving access to credit and developing and nurturing angel and venture capital networks, is an important component of promoting entrepreneurship in the Twin Counties Region.

Threats

Several issues threaten the future viability and competitiveness of the Twin Counties area. The main ones are highlighted below.

As noted above, unemployment is a serious issue affecting the Twin Counties area. Edgecombe County's rate dropped from 14.4% in August to 13.2% in September 2010. However, Edgecombe's rate remains the third highest in the state for the third consecutive month and fifth time in the last six months.¹⁸⁷ Nash County's unemployment rate was 11.1% in September, compared to the statewide rate of 9.1%.¹⁸⁸ Among North Carolina MSAs, the Rocky Mount MSA (Nash and Edgecombe counties) had the highest unemployment rate in September 2010 at

¹⁸⁷ <http://dailysoutherner.com/homepage/x2073118095/Unemployment-rate-drops-in-97-counties>

¹⁸⁸

http://www.google.com/publicdata?ds=usunemployment&met=unemployment_rate&idim=county:PA370950&dl=en&hl=en&q=edgecombe+unemployment#met=unemployment_rate&idim=state:ST370000&idim=county:PA370950:PA371150

11.8%, down from 12.7% in August, which at that time was also the highest rate among North Carolina MSAs.¹⁸⁹

Looking at unemployment by race tells an even more depressing story: Black unemployment in Edgecombe is more than five times that of white unemployment. In Nash County Latino unemployment is 3.5 times more likely than white unemployment and five times more likely in Edgecombe County. For both counties, white unemployment is the lowest at three percent.¹⁹⁰ According to a UNC-TV report on Edgecombe County, unemployment is such a major issue that more Edgecombe residents work outside the county than in it.¹⁹¹ Staggeringly high aggregate unemployment combined with major racial disparities in joblessness threatens to heighten pre-existing racial tensions and thus further depress economic development in the region.

Manufacturing job losses account for much of the unemployment in the Twin Counties Region. County leaders connect Edgecombe's chronically high unemployment with the closure of several factories in the 1990s, similar to the decline in manufacturing that has created economic problems across the nation.

¹⁸⁹ <http://dailysoutherner.com/homepage/x2073118095/Unemployment-rate-drops-in-97-counties>

¹⁹⁰ www.povertyeast.org/.../EdgecombeNashandWilsonInequality.doc

¹⁹¹ <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/video/flv/generic.html?s=nocn2as2afbqa16>

Edgecombe County has been able to recruit new industries, but they don't employ nearly the same numbers of people companies like Black & Decker once did.¹⁹²

Failure to address the high electric utility rate problem is a major threat to the future attractiveness of the Twin Counties Region as a place to live and do business. Because it adds substantially to the cost of doing business, firms looking to relocate and perhaps some of the firms already established in the region will in all likelihood explore other potential destinations with a more reasonable electric utility rate structure. Similarly, the high cost of electricity will likely continue to stifle the re-sale of existing homes and deter new construction in the Twin Counties Region.

Perception of crime is a continuing threat that must be addressed in order to improve economic development opportunities in the Twin Counties Area. Rocky Mount Councilman Reuben Blackwell stated, "right now, we have been defined as a place of poverty and crime. It's up to us to convert people and celebrate our successes."¹⁹³ This may prove a challenge under the shadow of a presumed serial killer in Rocky Mount who allegedly killed six African American prostitutes in the town (with at least three additional women still missing).¹⁹⁴

Particularly of concern is the public perception of how the case has been handled, with many feeling as though the murders were not given the attention they

¹⁹² <http://www.unctv.org/ncnow/patchwork/edgecombe.html>

¹⁹³ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/node/56341>

¹⁹⁴ <http://abagond.wordpress.com/2009/08/28/the-rocky-mount-killer/>

deserved at the time each occurred because of the race and socioeconomic status of the victims. "If it was someone of a different race, things would have been dealt with the first time around; it wouldn't have taken the fifth or sixth person to be murdered," says Andre Knight, Rocky Mount City Council member and president of the local NAACP chapter. He goes on to state, "All these women knew each other and lived in the same neighborhood; this is the sign of a potential serial killer. When it didn't get the kind of attention it needed, it made the African-American community frustrated."¹⁹⁵

Larger cities in the area, such as Raleigh/Durham, also pose a threat. These large job centers tend to absorb the Twin Counties' most qualified employees, leaving behind a less educated workforce, which makes it difficult for the area to attract businesses offering high paying, long-term employment – the types of jobs that would improve the economic viability of the region.

As noted earlier, the low levels of educational attainment that exist in the Twin Counties constitute another threat. In 2000, over a third of the region's adults age 25 and older had not completed high school.¹⁹⁶ Local officials are making serious and concerted efforts to improve the education and skills of the local population, but it appears that many of the workers being educated locally are leaving the area to pursue careers elsewhere. This phenomenon, known as "brain drain," can have a severe impact on a community if not recognized and addressed.

¹⁹⁵ <http://www.newsweek.com/2009/10/20/how-the-media-treat-murder.html>

¹⁹⁶ <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37/37065.html>

A threat also exists in the less than congenial relations between residents and planning officials in the area. In September, irate residents alleged that a rock mining operation was damaging the structure of their homes and accused planning officials of intentionally failing to inform them about the existence of this business enterprise.¹⁹⁷ In October, residents in southern Nash County were concerned that rezoning efforts would culminate in a poultry processing plant being developed in their area, and the potential environmental hazards it could bring.¹⁹⁸ Such tensions between regional planners and residents could potentially derail much needed community economic development in the Twin Counties region.

Finally, a major threat is the possibility of losing the momentum that has been built up around the Twin Counties regional collaboration and returning to an every community for itself economic development mentality. Given the current fiscal crisis the state of North Carolina is facing, maintaining momentum could be difficult, especially in view of the massive cuts that have to be made in city and county budgets.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Over past two decade, structural changes in the U.S. economy have eroded the economic base and employment prospects of the residents of the Twin Counties Region. In response to a deteriorating economic and employment opportunity

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/news/residents-irate-over-mining-135356>

¹⁹⁸ <http://www.rockymounttelegram.com/news/residents-raise-concerns-about-proposed-poultry-plant-161257>

structure, the most talented young people have voted with their feet, leaving behind a mostly semi-skilled and unskilled labor force that is aging in place. As plant closings and capital eroded the local tax base, structural unemployment, persistent poverty, and growing inequality between the “haves” and the “have-nots” have dominated life in the region. Some residents have responded to this state of affairs by engaging in unhealthy behaviors, including poor eating habits, alcohol and drug abuse, gang activity, and lethal violence, which have substantially diminished both the average life expectancy at birth and the attractiveness of the Twin Counties Region as a place to live and do business.

Leveraging an array of state and local financial incentives as well as investments in the region’s education, training, and transportation infrastructure, local officials have experienced moderate success in recruiting new industry and retaining some of the long-standing major employers in the Twin Counties Region. But this conventional approach to economic development has done little to eliminate geographical disparities that exist between Edgecombe and Nash counties, racial disparities that exist between the region’s whites and non-whites, and region-wide disparities in health and social-well being.

To address these issues and improve the attractiveness of the region as a place to live and do business, we offer the following recommendations:

Recommendation #1: Develop strategies to rebrand the Twin Counties Region as a sustainable community. This will require local officials to move beyond the conventional approach to economic development that focuses largely on

industrial recruitment and embrace strategies that fall under the broader rubric of *sustainable community economic development*. In terms of competitive strategy development, communities that embrace this broader approach takes seriously not only the profit motive (i.e., recruiting companies that are capable of thriving and prospering locally) and environmental considerations (i.e., recruiting companies and supporting homegrown entrepreneurial ventures that create high tech and green jobs that do not adversely impact the natural environment), but also issues of social justice and equity (i.e., striving to build individual and community assets especially for the region's most disenfranchised elements). Few communities do sustainable community economic development well. But, if the political will exists ample tools and resources are available to pursue community economic development through a triple bottom line sustainability lens.¹⁹⁹

Recommendation #2: Make talent recruitment a core element of the sustainable community economic development rebranding effort. That is, augment efforts to recruit plants with strategies to recruit people who can help propel the region forward. Homegrown talent that moved away and have done well should be the initial targets of this people-based recruitment strategy. For those who have aging parents and grandparents in the region, now may be an opportune time to consider returning home given that they will likely have elder care responsibilities. Some “home place” migration as it is called is already taking place. As with industrial recruitment, local officials should devise incentive packages for home

¹⁹⁹ For example, see Clay and Jones (2009).

grown talent to come back and used their creative talents and entrepreneurial acumen to develop viable businesses and sustainable jobs in the Twin Counties region.

Recommendation #3: Re-engineer K-20 education so that the system better equips the current and future workforce with the skills they will need to thrive and prosper in the highly volatile global economy of the 21st century. In the years ahead, the Twin Counties Region’s current and future workforce, including those who have either experienced economic dislocations or at substantial risks of such dislocations, will have to demonstrate greater entrepreneurial acumen, that is, “a ...willingness to take higher risks for higher rewards and the ability to be agile, resilient, tenacious, and decisive in responding to unanticipated crises and opportunities.”²⁰⁰ The region’s entire K-20 education system will have will have to play a major role in nurturing and growing this local entrepreneurial acumen. That is, Twin Counties Region’s education leaders must develop an appreciation of and demonstrate a major commitment to “intellectual entrepreneurship” and design initiatives that: (1) inspire students to become more entrepreneurial, (2) teach them how to be more entrepreneurial, (3) connect them with business and social entrepreneurs to learn directly and gain experience, and (4) create new attitudes, new knowledge, and new business and social ventures.” ²⁰¹ Given that many of the Twin Counties Region residents affected by economic dislocations will have to return to

²⁰⁰ Johnson and Kasarda, 2010, p. 28.

²⁰¹ Johnson and Kasarda, 2008, p. 29.

school to develop or fine tune their entrepreneurial skills, local higher education institutions must also pursue a variety of strategies and delivery mechanisms to address the entrepreneurial education needs of this population. Creating a local entrepreneurial class and culture would partially reduce the region's reliance on industrial recruitment as the primary economic development and job creation strategy. Under the leadership of Chancellor Holden Thorp, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has created a strategic roadmap for such an entrepreneurial education and training program.²⁰²

In addition to fostering entrepreneurialism, K-12 systems in the Twin Counties Region also need to infuse content on health and wellness, character education, and global awareness throughout their curriculum. Young people in the Twin Counties Region will need knowledge, training, and skills in these areas if they are to thrive and prosper in the years ahead.²⁰³

Recommendation #4: Nurture and grow the local elder care economy. As the Twin Counties Region's population continues to age, a diverse array of age-appropriate products and services will be needed to serve the pre-boomers (born before 1945) and boomers (born between 1945 and 1964). Unlimited opportunities exist for entrepreneurs who might be interested in figuring out how to design, build, and/or renovate commercial and residential properties as well as package and label goods and services that cater to the needs, cultural preferences, and consumer purchasing behaviors of the Twin Counties Region's "greying" population. Local

²⁰² Cherwitz, 2010).

²⁰³ Johnson and Kasarda (2008).

official will have to create and/or recruit angel and venture capital networks whose investments can jumpstart, nurture, and grow commercially viable businesses in the elder care marketplace.

Recommendation #5: Reform the Electric Utility Rate Structure. Electric utility costs in the Twin Counties Regions, especially in the city of Rocky Mount, are too high and the policies procedures undergirding electric utility rate setting are gravely in need of reform. Local officials must move quickly and aggressively to address this issue if the Twin Counties Region is going to successfully compete for business and talent in the years ahead. Failure to address this issue head on is a sure prescription for continued capital flight and loss of critical talent needed to propel the Twin Counties Region forward in the foreseeable future.

Recommendation #6: Leverage the power, influence, and global reach of the World Wide Web to promote the new Twin Counties Region's brand in the economic development marketplace. An effective web-based marketing strategy will require that all of region's websites be much better coordinated and linked with timely, consistent, and up to date information. That is, government, business, city, tourist, and economic development organizations all need to come together to create a unified vision of and marketing strategy for the Twin Counties Region that is consistent with the triple bottom line principles of sustainability.

Recommendation #7: Conduct region wide team building exercises with elected officials to begin to align platforms, processes, and people. An "*esprit de corps*" has to be established among the diverse community stakeholders if the Twin Counties Region is to enhance its competitiveness and attractiveness as a place to

live and do business. Only through effective team building can local officials begin to breakdown the historical barriers that have hindered the Twin Counties' effectiveness. The team building process is continuous as it can help to preserve individual and community interest, while also building interdependence for future success. Despite the diverse geopolitical affiliations that exist within the region, the overarching goal has to be the betterment of the region—especially in the current era of economic and fiscal austerity.

Recommendation #8: Develop an all stakeholder-inclusive Twin Counties

Region vision, mission, and set of core values. Once effective teambuilding is achieved, comprehensive and cascading vision, mission, core values, and strategy development is necessary in order for the Twin Counties Region to execute recommendations one through six set forth above. Objectives, benchmarks, targets, and timelines are also required—all designed with interdependencies and the overarching goal(s) in mind.

Appendix A: SWOT Results for Twin Counties Region, North Carolina

Strengths

Polity Capital

- Carolinas Gateway Partnership and its web site
 - Ability to present as unified area
- Green Efforts
 - Removing mfg homes
 - Clean vehicles/refueling stations in motor fleet
 - Keep America Beautiful
 - Farmers' Market
 - Uses for landfill gases
 - Piedmont Natural Gas LEED certified building
 - Wind turbine in Edgecombe Community College
 - Edgecombe public schools using biodiesel buses
- Rocky Mount Chamber of Commerce , Tarboro Chamber of Commerce , and Spring Hope Chamber of Commerce
- State and local commitment to attracting new industry to the area and helping them thrive
- Rocky Mount Tourism web site

Physical Capital

- Physical location for logistics
 - Transportation access via road and rail access to Mid-Atlantic Markets and International shipping facilities
 - Within an eight-hour trucking run of 60% of the country's population
- Industrial and Business Parks

- Available buildings and land for development
- Two Airports – RWI and ETC
- Numerous parks and rivers

Financial Capital

- Aggressive financial incentives for economic development efforts
- Number of High-Tech firms in the region
- Banks, credit unions, and other community financial institutions
- Diversity of Industry sectors
- RMECDC Industrial and Retail Incubator

Human Capital

- Existence of institutes of higher learning/training/workforce development
 - NC Wesleyan College
 - Shaw CAPE
 - Edgecombe Community College
 - Nash Community College
- Gateway Technology Center
- Turning Point Workforce Development Board/JobLink Career Center
- Nash Health Care Systems
- Heritage Hospital
- Lifecare Hospitals of NC
- Boice-Willis Clinic
- Community Hospital of Rocky Mount
- Edgecombe County Health Department
- Dedicated workforce

- Improvement in student achievement rates
- Nash-Edgecombe Economic Development

Cultural Capital

- Imperial Center (in renovated Imperial tobacco factory)
- Dunn Center for the Performing Arts/Minges Auditorium
- Fleming Building/Mobley Atrium
- Edgecombe County Cultural Arts Council
- Nash Count Arts Council
- Historic buildings and homes
- Rocky Mount Living History Museum
- Twin County Hall of Fame
- Edgecombe County Memorial Library
- Braswell Memorial Library
- Daily Southerner
- Nashville Graphic
- Rocky Mount Telegram
- Spring Hope Enterprise

Social Capital

- Parks and a wide variety of recreational activities
- Rocky Mount Sports Complex
- 285 Religious and faith-based organizations
- Civic organizations
- Mediating institutions and after-school programs
- Senior Centers and other resources for seniors

- Farmer's Market

Weaknesses

Polity Capital

- Inconsistency of information available across local gov't web sites and quality of sites

Physical Capital

- 14 brownfield sites located in Tarboro and Rocky Mount

Financial Capital

Human Capital

- Low student achievement in public schools
- SAT scores lower than state average
- Childhood Obesity Rates
- Lowest life expectancy at birth in the state

Cultural Capital

Social Capital

Opportunities

Polity Capital

- Improve level of coordination/available information on web sites
- Green efforts and branding
- Public/Private Partnerships
- Brand area as united, sustainable community

Physical Capital

- Northern Connector Road project
- Nash County Railroad Service expansion

Financial Capital

- Capitalize on strategic location by positioning and marketing as a logistics and distribution hub
- Regional Marketing Campaign of “Technology Corridor”
- BioEast Alliance
- Douglas Block
- Continue downtown revitalization programs
- Race to the Top Funds for school system
- Encourage entrepreneurial culture to boost/diversify economy and create jobs
- Improve access to credit
- Develop venture capital networks
- Rocky Mount Mills, mixed use project
- Food Processing Cluster
- Economic Development opportunities through such organizations as: One North Carolina Fund, Job Development Investment Grant (JDIG)

Human Capital

- Develop a technology workforce
- Improve Educational System
- Development of programs focused on diversity

Cultural Capital

- Improve external public perception of area
- “Why I Love Rocky Mount” Marketing Campaign

Social Capital

Threats

Polity Capital

- High utility rates
- Government/citizen tension over planning issues

Physical Capital

- Mining of area affecting existing homes

Financial Capital

- Historic reliance on declining industries
- Economic Downturn
- State and Federal budget cuts

Human Capital

- High Unemployment/Layoffs
 - Unemployment higher in Edgecombe than in Nash
 - Businesses closing/relocating elsewhere
- Lack of qualified workforce for high-tech jobs
- Residents commuting out of county for work
- Companies recruiting skilled workforce from out of town rather than utilizing local workforce
- Poor health and obesity issues

Cultural Capital

- High Crime Rates

- Serial Killer – perception of racial inequalities in investigation of case;
lack of community transparency
- Racial tensions in the community
- Gangs

Social Capital

Appendix B: Key Informant Qualitative Interviews

I. Methodology

To add dimension to the composite of information and recommendations gathered from the Twin Counties Competitiveness Assessment process, one-on-one interviews were also conducted with a cross-section of key community leaders — i.e. “key informants”. These individuals - elected and appointed officials (including Nash/Edgecombe County Commissioners and Rocky Mount City Council Members), business (for-profit and non-profit), education, and faith leaders - were all identified and contacted for structured confidential interviews. These interviews were conducted via phone and were manually recorded to the interview protocol respondent sheet. In total, 34 interviews were conducted – averaging approximately 43 minutes (the range was from 20 minutes to over 1 hour). For each interview, all respondents were offered a brief introduction to the project and specifics about the conversation (i.e. information gathering approach). To maintain the integrity of this phase, confidentiality was assured and candor was requested.

The benefits of conducting key informant interviews are to:

- Add depth to the assessment of the economic conditions and prospects of the region;
- Provide insights into the attitudes, concerns and outlook of these key community leaders; and
- Identify continuities and discontinuities from the information obtained in the community competitiveness intelligence gathering process.

As such, an open-ended questionnaire was used for all key informant interviews (the key informant questionnaires are included in Appendix C). Similar to the approach used in the

Twin Counties Competitiveness Assessment, the purpose of the key informant interviews was to obtain impressions concerning the community's *strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats*. There were three questionnaire versions, each having the same base elements yet customized to fit the locale (i.e. Nash County, Edgecombe County, or the City of Rocky Mount). In some questions, Nash County respondents were asked to compare their responses to Edgecombe County (and vice versa) while Rocky Mount respondents were asked to follow up/respond to how the Twin Counties geographic tie impacts their response or offer a comparison to Wilson and/or Greenville, NC.

II. Key Informant Responses Summary

Question 1: What does the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) do well?

How does the Nash/Edgecombe (Twin Counties) geographic tie impact its effectiveness?

As you can see, our interviews with key informants began with the simple question: What does Nash/Edgecombe/Rocky Mount do well? Many respondents spoke about the advantages of location (especially the Interstate 95/US 64 interchange), transportation, the area's rich history of entrepreneurship, the many successful businesses that were either born or located specifically in Rocky Mount proper, parks, recreation, fiscal management, utilities (i.e. water, gas, and sewer) and the plentiful natural resources:

“From a geographic standpoint...we have a railroad, I-95/US-64 intersection... a decent airport...have good access to transportation...have a [Tar] river that is undervalued and underappreciated for potential...in the past, we would owe our presence to the Tar River

and the Falls...the mills established in the 19th century...today the value of these resources may be more recreational and nature driven versus a commerce link...”

“[The region] has been good in terms of entrepreneurs ...e.g. Hardees...MBM (Meadowbrook Meats)...morphed itself into a meat distributor for wholesale (Hardees/ Golden Corral)...MBM is a very powerful business – has been a very entrepreneurial engine in the community...not as powerful as in the past...wholesale meat product distributor...principals are part owners of the Carolina Panthers...Boddie-Noell - two founders/ brothers are still very active...very visible leaders...very community minded...different banks...Planters, Savings and Loans...have been merged or consolidated...no longer major bank headquarters...Standard Electric...a printing business...a number of people have been incredibly successful...some of these economic drivers aren’t present [today].”

“Cummings Engine, Hospira, Honeywell...people don’t always understand the impact they make in the area. Babington Technologies – they make field kitchens for the military...very efficient kitchen equipment to be sent into the field and prepare hot meals for the military [used in Iraq and Afghanistan].”

“The area has a great history of entrepreneurial success...Nash Co...farmer/ exporter – sweet potatoes - Barnes Farming – buys and leases land...one of the largest farms [of its kind] in the world...cutting edge industry...Babington Technologies...have produced a heater/cooker that does not produce a heat signature (can’t be determined from infrared plane)....”

“Parks and Recreation are phenomenal...you can talk to folks...openness...you recognize and realize the crime problem but the police are working on it...[they] face a challenge of not being adequately staffed...Rocky Mount has a good city government.”

“Nash County does agriculture well...do healthcare well...do a lot of things [well]... keep taxes low...have industrial parks that are available...beginning to get into parks and recreation...partnering with municipalities well...not being a hindrance.”

“We [Nash] do well in our fiscal responsibilities...tax payer monies/funds...do very well...”

“First thing is [that Nash] is financially responsible...always run a conservative budget and stayed within budget...kept an adequate fund balance....”

“I think Edgecombe is good at preserving history and finding ways to capitalize on that...have done a good job of trying to get a good source of water...ahead of the curve by many counties...built infrastructure for new industry... a team has been developed to bring new jobs to the county...have a team that is willing to be aggressive to bring industry to county. Infrastructure – available sites that have all the utilities and railroad that industry would need.

While these respondents were positive and complementary about the historical accomplishments of the area's business community, others were equally optimistic about the business environment:

"I think the city provides great infrastructure for economic development...done a good job of getting the basic building blocks of water, sewer, gas, to places where they need to go...have maintained a solid delivery system of utilities...begun to do community outreach (neighborhood) well...in the last four years have begun to clean up the inner city communities...done a good job of facility renovation to create exceptional venues for public meetings and events. Have very responsive fire and police efforts."

"...the assets that Rocky Mount has...from a business and industrial recruitment...for very large companies...Cummings...the Chamber has done a very good job with every plant manager and has reached out to their families to make them a part of this community...social circles, political circles, board circles...have a great parks and recreation system that is underutilized...some don't seek out these assets...easy access to Outer Banks...."

"...does well with the civic and business communities providing support for the poor...does that well...we have a well qualified staff who run the city and many aspects of city government that perform well – better than any areas of the state."

Others were also very complimentary on city/county services – especially law enforcement, public education, and the Community Colleges;

"One thing we have a good sheriff's department...very proud of them...pretty impressed...very...extremely impressed with Nash Community College...have a campus in Tarboro and Rocky Mount...college [Wesleyan] has grown...public school system goes up and down (depending who is on the superintendent)...have had both good and bad superintendents...."

"Edgecombe may have a better sheriff's department...and Community College...in all the metrics to measure effectiveness...Edgecombe Community College came up high...student population is the 5th largest growing in their peer group...Nash Community College may not do as good a job."

The police in Rocky Mount do a good job...extremely pleased with county sheriffs."

Yet, in some cases, there were pauses, with respondents initially saying, "I'm not sure," "I don't know," or most pessimistically, "Nothing." For example:

“Nothing...really when I say ‘nothing’...that is true...we are in a pickle...don’t have the answers...nothing is outstanding...The Nash/ Edgecombe County split makes it so that we are the center of nothing...the railroad separates...Rocky Mount is not the county seat for either county so therefore it cannot fully execute....”

“Not really good at anything in either county...from [an] educational [viewpoint], a marginal county in the state and is not recognized as a leader...Nash county doesn’t have a great deal of debt...may need debt to grow...though good fiscal responsibility...[the counties] do a decent job of industry recruitment...with the two counties...somewhat a Siamese twin...joined at the hip because of Rocky Mount...don’t see any great leap forward...got some programs that are known...not in the top twenty of Community Colleges...have room for improvement - given limitations of population...still feel the effects of the flood [Floyd] and the lost of manufacturing jobs...fiscal responsibility is important...Nash does have the comfort of a fund balance...somewhat of a contraction in sales tax revenues...not superior in anything...nor worse off.”

“We do it poorly...don’t do a good job of creating a unified city...still a division...example...Edgecombe/Nash Rocky Mount school system...distinct governments and commissioners...horrible job of bringing them all together...until there is a unified approach...very difficult to bring these areas together...would not be able to give the area a high score.”

As an extension of this sentiment, these respondents noted other explanations regarding the impact of the two county geographic alignment:

“It’s terrible...the symbolic railroad that cuts the two counties has historically sparked animosity, jealousy, cultural and economic differences – this is very strong between the two counties...it’s negative or frustrating when one side tries to reach out to the other – rejected out-right or when they do get together it falls flat...for example, for 20 years we tried to get the two United Ways to merge administratively...took so much energy and it finally happened two years ago...”

“With Rocky Mount being located in two different counties... they don’t receive the same support as Nash or Edgecombe and Rocky Mount is the driving force for the local economy...they (industry) come because of what Rocky Mount has to offer...if Rocky Mount goes so goes the counties...they have not recognized how valuable Rocky Mount is to them.”

“It is more of a mental issue than anything else...it’s unfortunate that the city falls between two counties...even when you go to the ‘other’ county...you will find shifts within the communities... folks move from what was a good part to a newer good part...Edgecombe County used to be the force...through time, the economy, movement,

shifts, the economy moved to Nash and the city of Rocky Mount...gives the perception that they [counties] are against each other...."

"Because of geographic issues, you find competing interests. People who care more about their county are less concerned about the whole area and more concerned about their part...need to be comprehensive with Rocky Mount as the "capital" of that region. The county seats (courthouses) have not been reflective of a comprehensive community. When you look at Edgecombe County's lack of embracing the east side of Rocky Mount...that side has produced the largest tax base in Edgecombe County...all of that tax base was residential...the erosion of our residents from East Rocky Mount since the flood...lost lots of people...and the recession didn't help...Edgecombe County has set on their hands and has not sought to engage Rocky Mount to spur progress."

Likewise, other respondents said:

"...under the old regime, being divided by the railroad, and Tarboro being capital of Edgecombe; and Nashville being capital of Nash; Tarboro did not have an interest in investing in Edgecombe County/Rocky Mount. Tarboro was more of a focus [in the county]. The Edgecombe side [of Rocky Mount] was neglected."

"...in comparing the two counties...especially when it comes to the white community – they prefer Nash County...Edgecombe has higher taxes and it's predominately black...that image [of Nash] has been quietly promoted...when new folks come here to relocate, they are suggested to move to Nash...Edgecombe has been losing population...when folks retire and come back, they locate in Nash county. Need to improve the image of Twin Counties' area."

Overall, in almost every interview, community leaders were able to give very specific and detailed responses as to what the Twin Counties Region does well - and quite frankly, not so well.

Question 2: Does the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) have a clear strategic vision? If so, what is it? Do you think that it is widely known or understood? How is it fueled by or in conflict with the visions of Edgecombe and Nash counties (for Rocky Mount respondents)?

The responses to this question were overwhelming negative – across all regional areas. Overall, it was repeatedly noted that strategies were nonexistent, piecemeal, or questionable. For example:

"It's questionable...if we have one...how we promote it to the public is inadequate...need to do more..."

No...on the economic development board they are struggling for answers...."

"No...don't think we have the passion...has to go with vision...need it to move forward...have got to become more in-tune with what we need to do...and not let personalities get in the way...opportunity to clarify a vision and stick with it and stay on track...not widely known or understood...often shelve or shift issues that need to maintain."

"My belief is that you have to have a short and long term strategic plan...don't personally believe that the county has a long term vision...."

"No they do not have a vision."

"I would say "no". Part of this study would be to develop it...we will begin to think about it."

"Absolutely not...Rocky Mount has been in the throws of fighting one disaster after another...rather than developing a vision and applying folks to it...they had to chase issues – the flood, Hardees leaving, the Banks leaving...no viable strategic direction...fight one battle then another...ranges across every socio-economic line and area of the community...nonprofits, everything...no momentum or strategic direction."

"Don't feel like any of the entities have expressed and communicated a strategic vision...doesn't make sense for each to create one...especially with Tarboro and Nashville, those county seats will not go with Rocky Mount...if it [Rocky Mount] goes down...so will the counties...the population base is in Rocky Mount...the three governmental entities need a common strategic vision...cut out one layer...have Rocky Mount at the middle of it."

"No...don't think so...they have some words that talk about the future...a bit dated...plan called "Together Tomorrow" more about land use...has the trappings of a plan...to the extent – I couldn't tell you what it is...the average citizen couldn't tell you either. The average civic or business leader couldn't tell you either."

"Leadership [is lacking] in the counties...the two counties are about as dissimilar as they can be...there has been rivalry...Edgecombe County has a higher unemployment rate and negative issues...Nash is in very good shape financially...as it relates to its requirements set by the state. The western part of Nash County probably doesn't feel

like they are part of Rocky Mount. Bailey and Middlesex probably feel that they are more a part of Raleigh than Rocky Mount.”

“Does the city of Rocky Mount have a clear vision...don’t think we have (they know what they want to do) but haven’t figured out the how or timelines...don’t have an area wide strategy...[lack of] intergovernmental and intercommunity cooperation...always a stumbling block when we don’t share the same vision or direction...don’t want to come on board with a given project...being in two counties...must deal with two county governments...need to begin to focus on rebuilding the central city core...need to focus it in a 21st century manner.”

On the other hand, some respondents felt that there were indeed strategic visions for the region. They could not, however, adequately and consistently articulate what those visions entailed:

“I think it is a work in process...have had a number of gatherings...symposia with some really smart people that have ties to Rocky Mount coming and talking about working on reinventing a vision.”

“In general, there are a lot of visions, but are they strategic?”

“The strategic vision, in simple terms, is we want to grow and have businesses that support our people.”

“I think that there is...a comprehensive plan...it’s large...balanced across the city in terms of economic development and prosperity...balance economic growth and prosperity across the city...develop programs and economic growth across the city so that the whole can prosper...provide business growth, infrastructure, programming needs for the whole community with emphasis on the whole city.”

“Doesn’t know if it’s clear...lots of entities working towards same goals and people are interested in bringing them together...the city of Rocky Mount has done something similar but instead of doing something [with it] they put it on a shelf....”

“I think we do...always have a vision and try to broaden it...try to sustain where we are...and if we can’t move forward...try to maintain what they have...education, health issues...do not plan just for today...look 15-20 years beyond.”

During these interviews, it was readily clear that there was agreement about a lack of consistent strategic vision. While some respondents engaged in blunt language and negative overtones about the region’s lack of strategic intent, others attempted to explain that they felt these visions existed and what they entailed. There was also widespread agreement among

respondents that the residents of the Twin Counties Region are consistently uninformed about the strategic goals for the future.

Question 3: Please cite examples of how you think the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) is a good place to start, maintain, and/or expand a business? Where are the best areas/places to start a business? Why? How would you compare your answer to Edgecombe/ Nash County?

Respondents cite that there are numerous areas to start, maintain, or expand businesses in the region – options that fit almost any type of industry.

Mostly on the west side of the Nash County...that is where you have the best incomes...depends on the type of business...better educated, less crime...accessible to Wilson and Raleigh...the Nash County side is the place where people who are starting a business look.”

“Best places – depends on what you are trying to do...the downtown is a “gem”...it is architecturally a gem...the rent is low...getting investment from the city...Streetscape Plan...redoing streets and sidewalks...lighting, signage....”

“Rocky Mount could arguably be viewed as a perfect place to test middle market America...could be the “little Atlanta”...has some of the same dynamics...newly elected black leadership coming from business and middle class...grassroots perspective...has white owned banks with strong interest in the community and entrepreneurs....”

“Best places [to start a business] – depends on what kind – commercial development in Whitakers...anywhere really...there is plenty of land – no shortage...Universal Leaf built a plant in Nash County – re-drying plant for tobacco – 25 acres under roof...bought 1000 acres.”

“We are the gateway to the eastern part of state...major corridors...down from NY...up from FL...strategically located city. Best areas to start – depends upon what type of business...our business development staff and partners...focus on western part of the city...majority of white communities...more resources...if they where choosing, would choose the west side because of less crime and better infrastructure...and established businesses.”

“We are strategically located and have all kinds of transportation...rail, air, and interstate I-95/US-64...working on tourism...lots of resources to be used...economic

development as well as boosting the revenue in the area...Nash is a good place...30 miles out of Raleigh, the capital...45 miles from Research Triangle Park.”

“Only place where I-95/US-64 cross...good road infrastructure...well maintained...water and sewer available...incentives through Gateway should be attractive...willingness of Nash and municipalities to encourage business to come is very positive.”

“Nash co has an excellent tax rate...67 cents...has incentive plans for businesses...just developed a small business incentive plan...the city of Rocky Mount has a similar plan...got available labor...high unemployment...but we have a good workforce...could and should spend more time to better educate to prepare them for jobs of the 21st century...school system provides that opportunity. Have shell buildings that are available for new businesses....”

“Twin counties geography can hinder because of what goes on the other side of the tracks...certain areas may be attractive to certain businesses...rich versus poor...richer areas aren’t wanting certain businesses to locate...the latest one is the Poultry Plant that is coming to Nash county that is to be near a water source...Neuse River?”

As you can see, while respondents offered a plethora of locations to start, maintain, or expand a business, in most cases, Nash County was deemed as offering a better environment than Edgecombe. The following responses are a bit more strongly worded advocates of Nash County development:

“Rocky Mount is a metropolitan area...the whole area has a large unemployment rate with Edgecombe leading...Nash has a large availability...they have strong business leadership that Edgecombe doesn’t have.”

“Nash County has jobs, businesses, and shopping areas...[Edgecombe residents] have to spend money in Nash county if they want to purchase anything...hard to recoup tax revenue...like going into another world over the railroad tracks.”

“There are lots of similarities [between Edgecombe and Nash]...because of I-95...they [Nash] have a larger tax base and population – the shift has moved...already have utilities...a lot has to do with numbers...tax base and people...Edgecombe County has shot themselves in the foot and Nash County has helped...didn’t treat city equitably...hard to correct 30 years of mishaps in 5 years.”

“Compared to Edgecombe...personal belief is Edgecombe has difficulty with Rocky Mount...in that they like to see everything go towards Tarboro and have no incentive to develop on the eastern side of Rocky Mount...once they can get over the hurdle of eastern Rocky Mount versus Tarboro, they will be able to see growth move a lot faster than it is now.”

“Maybe not the same in Edgecombe or in the same way...they are working hard to improve themselves.”

“Edgecombe has it’s challenges as far as tax base with taxes 84 versus 67 cents...declining population and retail base...hard to fix problems with property tax...lots of social needs...so no funds for other things...schools, cultural needs.”

Nonetheless, there are strong advocates for Edgecombe County as a suitable place for industry:

“[Edgecombe] has an available workforce...have one of the highest unemployment rates...but that can be a positive for the recruitment of industry. Many people have been trained in industry...much job loss in the past 20 years...can point to companies that they can find well-trained workforce among residents....”

“Some think that the Nash County labor force is of a higher caliber and better education [than Edgecombe]...there are good people in Edgecombe county too...Edgecombe would be equal if not better to start, maintain, or grow a business.”

“Edgecombe County’s greatest asset is its people...very dedicated, hard working, diverse...people don’t mind saying hello and people are anxious to work and make it on their own.”

Question 4: Please describe the state of the business environment in the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount)? Healthy? Unhealthy? Why is it better or worse than Nash/Edgecombe County? How does the Twin Counties geography help or hinder this environment (for Rocky Mount respondents)? Why is it better or worse than other cities like Greenville or Wilson (for Rocky Mount respondents)?

Even before the current decline of the national economy, the Twin Counties region has seen the deterioration of the local business environment – with shifts in corporate

headquarters, closings, and the changes in the agricultural economy. There have also been longstanding issues with race relations and population changes. Almost all respondents answered this question with these issues in mind:

“I don’t know...in general it’s healthy...Nash County and Rocky Mount...all are doing well...Rocky Mount has a lot of discount houses and they are doing well...seems to be flourishing...right in Rocky Mount things are healthy – despite unemployment...a lot healthier than other parts of the country....”

“It is unhealthy in how it is selfish...it’s kind of like a good old boy network and locked...if you are not a part of that network, it is hard to get access to resources within that group...lots of small business are unable to get what they need because they are not a part of that network.”

“The Twin Counties feeds it [unhealthiness] because of racism and classism...it’s like a broad range of unhealthy behaviors toward different groups that feeds unhealthy attitudes of the business community.”

“Overall, it’s unhealthy...the problem 1) [Twin County residents] go to another town to go shop...2) not enough good restaurants...i.e. independents...like Raleigh or even Wilson...need to support our buildings...electricity is very expensive....”

“Right about now it is unhealthy...lot of textile plants closed and people lost jobs...lost Abbott Labs and they brought in Hospira...but only employed about half of what Abbott had.”

“Unhealthy...struggling...Edgecombe County is losing population faster than any county in the state...that alone describes an unhealthy environment. Compared to Nash they have a crisis of leadership...business leaders are not as involved in Edgecombe County as they are Nash.”

“Unhealthy...high unemployment...businesses are not doing well...not hiring...most of the successful businesses historically are continuing to grow...[but it is] not good right now. The worry is that there is a fairly poor educational system...”

“Part of the problem in Edgecombe and Nash is the reputation for not working together...a city divided cannot stand...Nash has it’s own problems with a series of things going on in Rocky Mount.

When the Twin Counties Region (especially Rocky Mount) is compared to Greenville and Wilson, many respondents feel that Greenville has an advantage because of the University (ECU) and the large and growing hospital system. Wilson, on the other hand, is

seen as more similar to Rocky Mount, yet may have a stronger vision for the growth of their city.

Question 5: What areas need improvement or what are the opportunities in the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount)?

Respondents had strong opinions about what needs to be done to improve the area:

“Low income housing...there’s only an interest for workforce housing...no people to take it on...need decent low income housing...still a need for that...[emerging] not for profit sector...when you look at Rocky Mount and eastern NC the not for profit sector is an emerging economy...[need for] large nonprofits and advocacy groups...e.g. Golden Leaf...United Way...etc.”

“Crime and Education...but also the utility rates...those rates are real problem.”

“The crime rate is higher...feels it may have come down over last year...the struggle between the city and the counties...the dropout rates...annexation...North Carolina is one of three states that still has it [annexation]...the counties don’t want it...”

“Need to focus on crime issues...issue (historical) of utility rates – lot of it is perception – but the kilowatt hour in Rocky Mount versus Nashville is 20% more.”

“Education, crime - need to get people together to have a conversation...begin dialogue.”

“...crime and jobs...have to reduce crime if you want [to recruit] jobs! People want jobs...want industry...not coming in unless you reduce the crime.”

“The most important thing for economic growth is education...must fix public school system or continue to be weak. The abysmal downtown...”

Interestingly, some respondents also mentioned the lack of independent restaurants as a notable improvement in the Twin Counties region. While the area has a plethora of chain establishments, in order to have a “good” dining experience, residents must go to nearby Wilson, Greenville, or even Raleigh.

Besides needing a good place to dine - crime, education, and jobs were the key themes for areas of improvement for the region. The deteriorating appearance of certain east-side

neighborhoods and downtown Rocky Mount were also mentioned. Small business owners and entrepreneurs felt strongly that the required services (e.g. permits) for opening a business are cumbersome and lack coordination.

Question 6: What does the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) manage poorly?

In addition to the areas mentioned previously (crime, education, and jobs) the following issues were noted as areas that the region manages poorly:

"[The area] is a leader in many negative categories...children living in poverty...teens in trouble...incidence of breast cancer...if it's negative we are at the top...everybody knows the failure of the public schools...."

"We have a tremendous amount of room to improve services for senior citizens...even though we have started, we have a long way to go with our cultural and recreational needs...long way to go with infrastructure...having water throughout county...25 years behind...need to continue to diversify industry...."

"The greatest problem is the amount of money we spend on social services...not sure there is a way to cut that...budget is out of proportion...."

"Communication to citizens is managed poorly and keeping them up to date...the marketing piece of bringing general public into decision-making is an area of opportunity."

"...getting information out to the public...board of commissioners...county staff...another is sometimes we move too slowly in moving ahead with projects...waiting while it becomes more expensive...need to be on top of everything...and go on and move forward...for example, we have been talking about recreational programs and just fully got started...hired a recreation director three years ago. Organized a senior center...need one in the southern end of the county and recreational parks...funds are tight now...."

“Improving the economic development on the Edgecombe side...downtown development was also neglected...was allowed to die...over the last 4-5 years we have tried to reconstruct and reinvest in downtown...now have a long-term plan.”

“A lot has been said about utility rates...[the area is] competitive on everything but electric - water, sewer, natural gas...hard to compete with Progress Energy who has customers in the tens of millions when we are in a consortium that we have no control over...the issue of utilities is something that we cannot [directly] impact...a card that we were dealt...the legislature has to help...got to roll with the punches...must put pressure on state and federal legislature to restructure debt to become more manageable...the state treasurer can do it...needs to be pushed to do it...”

The “extremely high” utility rates were mentioned in several instances – across numerous questions – as a problem for residents, small businesses, and industry recruitment.

Question 7: What are the favorable conditions that the community (Edgecombe, Nash, Rocky Mount) is facing?

Several of the strengths and opportunities mentioned in the Twin Counties Competitiveness Assessment were also mentioned in the key respondent interviews:

“I-95/US-64 has got to pay off in a significant way...has to be worth something...in terms of geography...also have north/south rail line...how it splits the county (problem) how to make it a plus...has an airport that large corporate planes can get in...easier than either RDU or Greenville....”

“Excellent medical community...well run hospital...two community colleges...that are well respected in the state...favorable hard working and effective economic development corporation...lot of people working hard to differentiate ourselves...Gateway Technology Center...can go there and be part of remote learning...e.g. an MBA from Fayetteville State, interaction (classes) with NCSU and ECU.”

“The possibility of the chicken processing plant will be good...will be good for the economy...the corridor of I-95/US-64 – great distribution center...to attract distribution outlets...sure the city looks to that and is working on it...being close to Raleigh...most promising...be positive about what we have and not have.”

“Location I-95/US-64...Raleigh, Greenville proximity...community as a whole...has come together...don’t realize it until something bad happens (flood)...if we could capitalize on education and work ethic could be an awesome city...overall there are great people.”

“We are improving the downtown area which will entice businesses...the crimes are being solved quickly and regularly...if they see where crime is going unsolved (except the 7 ladies killed) will work in the city’s favor...a lot of houses that have been abandoned...there are stricter codes to either improve or demolish...trying to put up new homes and duplexes...should also be an enticement.”

“There are several things in general...Rocky Mount Mills project...Jim Goodman of WRAL in Raleigh...civic leader...his company developed the American Tobacco complex in Durham...a few years ago...he bought an old textile mill – Rocky Mount Mills...brick building on the Tar River...wants to do the same thing in Rocky Mount...looking for a lead tenant...would be a huge [economic development] catalyst...”

“The Douglas Block project and Streetscape will make a big difference in downtown Rocky Mount and will be very attractive...the Douglas Block project has begun to sign tenants to occupy those spaces...the Imperial Center is first class all the way...in the process of getting a high end restaurant downtown...trying to get it...will be a private restaurant that will be in the facility that used to be occupied by the Carlton House.”

“Some of the Race to the Top funds will help education...will require them to work to their highest potential...[this should lead] to attract business – [and eventually] having a great educational system...”

“I think we have some of the infrastructure...we need more... schools...the capability is there...our Community College [Edgecombe] is doing well...and becoming a real highlight compared to others...Tarboro and the Edgecombe County – some of the best people in the world live here...some smart people with great resources live here [too].”

“Favorable one is making improvements in educational system...working through the college system...early college...and priorities for upgrading educational system...building new high school...and to entice new jobs must upgrade education...must go beyond high school to be employable...need a job ready workforce.”

Overwhelmingly, many respondents from Edgecombe, Nash, and Rocky Mount made numerous comments about the quality of the people in the area – as a significant source of pride.

Question 8: What are the interesting trends? Is the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) in a position to benefit from those trends?

A number of inventive and creative trends were mentioned as opportunities that could benefit the future of the Twin Counties Region:

“Environmentally, there is a possibility of creating energy through wind...put those up [wind turbines]...trend developing across the nation...wind apparatus that turns with the wind to create energy.”

“Work with Parks and Recreation...senior centers...take care of children...and senior population (which is growing and we must provide more...e.g. in home care, meals delivered, and activities)...and other issues to improve people.”

“We have a population that is growing older...heard Jim Johnson talk about the opportunity to fit elder houses...can support a local industry...can build local entrepreneurs...retirement community opportunities...not doing much to take advantage of that.”

“[We are] still very much an agricultural base...lots of developments in agriculture that can be taken advantage of...2nd 3rd generation farm owners are savvy...always developing new crops to grow in the county...seem to do quite a bit of exploring new energy types...solar for example...we have a major pharmaceutical company which is always developing things.”

“We have done a detailed study...on converting methane in land field into useful profit center...final stages...hopefully something will be done in a year...build a plant where methane is converted into the supply system as a revenue source instead of an atmospheric liability. The #1 thing we can do.”

“We are talking about how we can take advantage of the gas out of landfills – looking at options for how we can use that gas...and looking at where we can diversify anything we do...began to look at the green area and how we can develop new jobs and bring in foundations and any other funds we can get to assist us.”

“Tourism and eco-tourism...[taking advantage of] the river, our good climate, biking, hiking, tourism in general ...huge opportunity.”

The question of whether the community at large is ready to take advantage of these ideas (and others) will depend on the readiness of the entrepreneurial and economic development entities. Given the history of entrepreneurship in the Twin Counties Region, a renewed sense of growth and prosperity can be obtained – if executed well in this community.

Question 9: How advanced is the area (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) in technology?

For sure, the region, like most rural areas, has numerous opportunities for growth in technology. Many respondents feel that the area is not very advanced, while others see incremental improvements that move the region towards a better technological base:

“Not very...just not.”

“...we are about ten years behind...way behind... we toy around with Wi-Fi as an example...broadband...suppose we could become the Wi-Fi city...every community would have hot spots...that would be a great vision...most obvious example.”

“We may be a bit behind...but we do have industries that are high tech...we don’t think we have the adequate supply....once our young people are trained, they tend to take jobs somewhere else...not where we should be in the area of technology....golden opportunity in technology and transportation....[could be] best in the state...not growing as fast as other areas in the state...e.g. RTP....Twin Counties is not as crowded and congested.”

“How can we be advanced when we have [so many] households that don’t have high speed Internet?”

“Lacking...[it’s an] opportunity...have heard it in the feedback from recruiting companies...should be going after high tech...but don’t have high tech workforce...cannot breeze through high school and not care and get a high tech

job...need to start at the bottom...which is at home...and if they care about the education [at home]...then we will see a change....if they don't have a home life, then we need to help...tutoring."

"Nash county government, per se, is advanced...the county is woefully short on availability of internet...some pockets have none, others inadequate...been a bear...deregulated...private, profit driven and a rural county struggles to make it work...tried to entice company's to support...got three commissioners still on dial up."

"We are behind...growing, but behind...trying to wire (Wi-Fi) available downtown...but seeing it in the city business...just bought new software to install so that people can go online to pay bills...utilities bills...only way has been to go downtown stand in line and pay bills...especially for those who wait until the last minute."

As such, there are a number of opportunities – especially technological advancements to move the region to a 21st century, digital, socially networked society.

Question 10: What obstacles does the community (Nash, Edgecombe, Rocky Mount) face?

The region faces numerous obstacles, in line with those that were mentioned in the Twin Counties Assessment. Crime, education, health, employability, and attracting students back to the region after graduation are key issues. For example:

"Crime, education (K-12), utility rates, three governments (because of community split)...these are the biggest obstacles."

"Rocky Mount needed more cohesion among leadership and bridge some gaps...would have a vision for the reason and a plan to achieve."

"In the throws of a chicken processing plant that has become controversial...water contamination and dead chickens...want to bring 1100 jobs and with 12,000 unemployed...Wilson County Economic Development, City of Wilson, and Chamber have come against it and sued Nash County this week...what is ironic is we are doing the study to turn things around...get a public traded company with an ultra modern facility and people spreading misinformation to get them to not come...been frustrating."

“Begins and ends with public education...higher education is ok...high, middle and elementary need a huge transformation...new Rocky Mount High School under construction...one of 5 high schools. This cannot transform public education.”

“A study came out that Nash County SAT scores went down 100 points except for Tarboro High School...the reason they went down is because more kids are taking it...(self deception)...shocking...should have set off every alarm...not that we haven’t been warned....”

“Utilities are a big obstacle...say there is nothing that can be done about it but folks are moving out of Rocky Mount proper if they can to avoid the excessive utility bills.”

“The school system...have to make improvements...readiness piece...we also have big health concerns - teenage pregnancy, childhood and adult obesity...these health concerns are drawbacks...also a high STD rate...mental health issues...has resonated for us locally...that is a concern as well...all those health issues...we need the self sufficiency piece...call is for financial assistance to pay utility bills and rent...have to come back to basics”

“The good and bad is our diversity...Rocky Mount has a lot of diversity...50/50 [majority/ minority]– continue to have it...has been an issue...predominately black city council...the white community thought things were going to hell...[however, we have had] little disagreement...we all work together...but still in the south and that plays a role.”

“Our woefully short availability of the world wide web...short on infrastructure...water/ sewer...have been dependent on state for revenue...in bad times, it cascades...need a more diverse revenue stream...have an aging population and there are expensive needs that go with that...due to us being a rural county, we need to find ways to bring residents back after they complete college...can do more...got to improve educational system...get people ready to enter the workforce or go to college.”

“Need to get more people in their area to stay in the area...too many kids leave for college and never come back...need to do something to retain them...lots of good people have been lost for one reason or another...the economy is a factor.”

“Get over the hump of declining population...need to get kids to stay home or come back home.”

“Major obstacle is unemployment...so many people have limited skills...and need new ones to help them find jobs...so people need to be retrained...especially 50+ age range. Breast cancer is number 16th in the nation...why is it happening in such a small county...getting teens to understand promiscuity and HIV and AIDS...having programs to make teens aware of how choices can impact future.”

As noted, there is a broad range of obstacles that the Twin Counties region has to overcome as part of their plan for future competitiveness.

Summary and Recommendations

This Appendix has summarized the key informant interviews conducted as part of the Twin Counties Competitiveness Assessment. Thirty-four interviews were conducted and each participant was asked ten open-ended questions about their impressions of the Twin Counties Region.

The Twin Counties Competitiveness Assessment offered six recommendations to improve the attractiveness of the region. In addition, this summary will offer *two* additional recommendations. Based on the feedback from these interviews, there are two glaring opportunities for the Twin Counties region to unify and execute in the following manner – consistent with the triple bottom line principles of sustainability:

Recommendation #7: Conduct region wide team building experiences among elected officials to begin to align platforms, processes, and people. In order for the region to begin to work together, an “*esprit de corps*” has to be manifested. Also known as “*morale*”, esprit de corps is an intangible term used to describe the capacity of people to maintain belief in an institution or a goal, or even in oneself and others (Wikipedia). The goal in this case, has to be determined and agreed upon by all officials. Only through effective team building can officials begin to break down the historical barriers that have hindered the Twin Counties effectiveness. However, on a personal level, if any individual is reluctant to fully engage and commit to the process, then the effort may be futile. The team building process is continuous as it can help to preserve individual and community interest, while also building interdependence for future success. Despite political affiliations and

constituencies, the over arching goal has to be the betterment of the region – especially in this critical time of economic recovery.

Recommendation #8: Develop a Twin Counties Regional Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategy that includes all constituents – including public services, for profit and nonprofit business, education, and faith based entities – to name a few. After effective teambuilding, comprehensive and cascading Vision, Mission, Values, and Strategy development is key for the Twin Counties region to effectively execute the six recommendations suggested in the Twin Counties Competitiveness Assessment. An overarching Twin Counties strategy needs to be conceived, with cascading strategies for each sub-entity. Objectives, measures, targets, and timelines are also required – all designed with interdependencies and the overarching goal(s) in mind.

In conclusion, one respondent offered the following personal vision for the Twin Counties region:

“I have a personal dream/belief that if we had our city [region] wired so that not only could we almost create an alternative to the Research Triangle Park as an example...instead of having to commute in all that traffic...could be a shorter ride...along the Tar River and Rocky Mount Mills...because of the technology (what Cisco can do) we can be just as connected as in Shanghai or Silicon Valley...would distinguish us from Wilson, Greenville, and other cities.”

This type of connectivity will be necessary for the region to not only become a high tech corridor, but to improve education, distribution, transportation, tourism, and agricultural efforts within the landscape of the numerous other issues identified in this report.

Appendix C: Key Informant Interview Protocols

Edgecombe County Competitiveness Study Telephone Script

Name

Contact Information

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

I am Terry Johnson. I am a consultant working with Professor Jim Johnson from the Frank Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina.

Leaders from the Twin Counties (Edgecombe and Nash) have asked us to evaluate the economic environment in both counties and in the city of Rocky Mount. Our conversation will primarily focus on Edgecombe County.

As part of this assessment, we are conducting short telephone interviews with a cross section of individuals identified from among the key leaders in the county. This will be a brief conversation, no more than 15 minutes.

I appreciate your willingness to participate. Your comments are confidential, so I urge you to speak with candor. We will not identify those interviewed nor attribute any statement to any person.

1. What does Edgecombe County do well? How would you compare this to Nash County?
2. Does the county have a clear strategic vision? If so, what is it? Do you think that it is widely known or understood?
3. Please cite examples of why you think Edgecombe County is a good place to start, maintain, and/or expand a business? How would you compare your answer to Nash County?
4. Please describe the state of the business environment in Edgecombe County? Healthy? Unhealthy? Why is it better or worse than Nash?
5. What areas need improvement or what are the opportunities in Edgecombe County?

6. What are the areas that Edgecombe County manages poorly?
7. What are the favorable circumstances that Edgecombe County is facing? How do these circumstances compare to Nash County?
8. What are the interesting trends?
 - a. Is the county in a position to benefit from those trends?
9. How advanced is the community in technology?
10. What obstacles does Edgecombe County face?

Thank you! We aim to have the report completed by the end of December. Your input will help greatly in this effort. If you have any questions about this interview or the report, I can be reached at 614-284-8539.

Nash County Competitiveness Study Telephone Script

Name

Contact Information

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

I am Terry Johnson. I am a consultant working with Professor Jim Johnson from the Frank Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina.

Leaders from the Twin Counties (Edgecombe and Nash) have asked us to evaluate the economic environment in both counties and in the city of Rocky Mount. Our conversation will primarily focus on Nash County.

As part of this assessment, we are conducting short telephone interviews with a cross section of individuals identified from among the key leaders in the county. This will be a brief conversation, no more than 15 minutes.

I appreciate your willingness to participate. Your comments are confidential, so I urge you to speak with candor. We will not identify those interviewed nor attribute any statement to any person.

11. What does Nash County do well? How would you compare this to Edgecombe County?

12. Does the county have a clear strategic vision? If so, what is it? Do you think that it is widely known or understood?

13. Please cite examples of how you think Nash County is a good place to start, maintain, and/or expand a business? How would you compare your answer to Edgecombe County?

14. Please describe the state of the business environment in Nash County? Healthy? Unhealthy? Why is it better or worse than Edgecombe?

15. What areas need improvement or what are the opportunities in Nash County?

16. What are the areas that Nash County manages poorly?

17. What are the favorable circumstances that Nash County is facing? How do these circumstances compare to Edgecombe County?

18. What are the interesting trends?

b. Is the county in a position to benefit from those trends?

19. How advanced is the community in technology?

20. What obstacles does Nash County face?

Thank you! We aim to have the report completed by the end of December. Your input will help greatly in this effort. If you have any questions about this interview or the report, I can be reached at 614-284-8539.

Rocky Mount Competitiveness Study Telephone Script

Name:

Contact Information:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today.

I am Terry Johnson. I am a consultant working with Professor Jim Johnson from the Frank Kenan Institute of Private Enterprise at the University of North Carolina.

Leaders from the Twin Counties (Edgecombe and Nash) have asked us to evaluate the economic environment in both counties and in the city of Rocky Mount. Our conversation will primarily focus on the city of Rocky Mount.

As part of this assessment, we are conducting short telephone interviews with a cross section of individuals identified from among the key leaders in the city. This will be a brief conversation, no more than 15 minutes.

I appreciate your willingness to participate. Your comments are confidential, so I urge you to speak with candor. We will not identify those interviewed nor attribute any statement to any person.

21. What does Rocky Mount do well? How does the Edgecombe/Nash (Twin Counties) geographic tie impact the city's effectiveness?

22. Does Rocky Mount have a clear strategic vision? If so, what is it? Do you think that it is widely known or understood? How is it fueled by or in conflict with the visions of Edgecombe and Nash counties?

23. Please cite examples of why you think Rocky Mount is a good place to start, maintain, and/or expand a business? Where are the best areas/places to start a business? Why?

24. Please describe the state of the business environment in Rocky Mount? Healthy? Unhealthy? How does the Twin Counties geography help or hinder this environment? Why is it better or worse than other cities like Greenville or Wilson?

25.What areas need improvement or what are the opportunities for Rocky Mount?

26.What are the areas that Rocky Mount manages poorly?

27.What are the favorable circumstances that Rocky Mount is facing? How do the Twin Counties geography help these circumstances?

28.What are the interesting trends?

c. Is the city in a position to benefit from those trends?

29.How advanced is the city in technology?

30.What obstacles does Rocky Mount face?

Thank you! We aim to have the report completed by the end of December. Your input will help greatly in this effort. If you have any questions about this interview or the report, I can be reached at 614-284-8539.